

cigar aficionado

THE GOOD LIFE MAGAZINE FOR MEN

www.cigaraficionado.com

ALEX RODRIGUEZ

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH
MARVIN R. SHANKEN

PERFECT
PAIRINGS
SCOTCH AND
CIGARS

RYDER CUP
GOLF'S MOST
EXCITING BATTLE

PIGSKIN
PREVIEW
WHO WILL WIN
IN THE NFL?

HOW CASINOS
CIDDLE THEIR
HIGH ROLLERS

83 CIGARS
RATED



Dewar's®

DOUBLE AGED

• FOR EXTRA •
SMOOTHNESS

Dewar's®

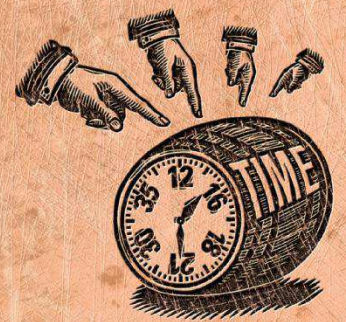
DOUBLE AGED

• FOR EXTRA •
SMOOTHNESS

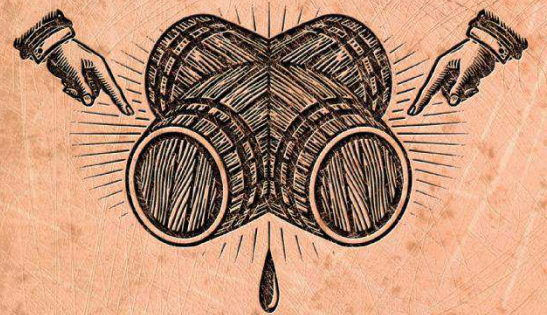
Dewar's®

DOUBLE AGED

• FOR EXTRA •
SMOOTHNESS



WE AGE



WE BLEND



WE AGE AGAIN

ENJOY RESPONSIBLY. © 2018 DEWAR'S, WHITE LABEL, ITS TRADE DRESS, TRUE SCOTCH, THE CELTIC DEVICE AND THE JOHN DEWAR SIGNATURE ARE TRADEMARKS. BLENDED SCOTCH WHISKY – 40% ALC. BY VOL. *THIS IS ONLY SPECIFIC TO THE WHITE LABEL PRODUCT.

Dewar's®

What's in a name? In a word, standards. At Dewar's we've made quite a name for ourselves by living true to our standards for over 130 years. That's about how long we have been double ageing our whisky.

Why? For extra smoothness.

It takes longer and costs more but ageing, blending and ageing again is the gold standard when it comes to marrying forty different single malts and grains into one super smooth Dewar's.

LIVE TRUE

Dewar's®

DOUBLE AGED
• FOR EXTRA •
SMOOTHNESS



KARMA

PURSuing PLEASURE.
PURSuing LIFE.

Born in Southern California.

Where design, technology and imagination come together.

Drive less than 50 miles a day? You will never buy gas.

More? Feed the engine, and it will recharge the battery
to provide up to 300 miles of range.

For people who think the status quo is not status at all.

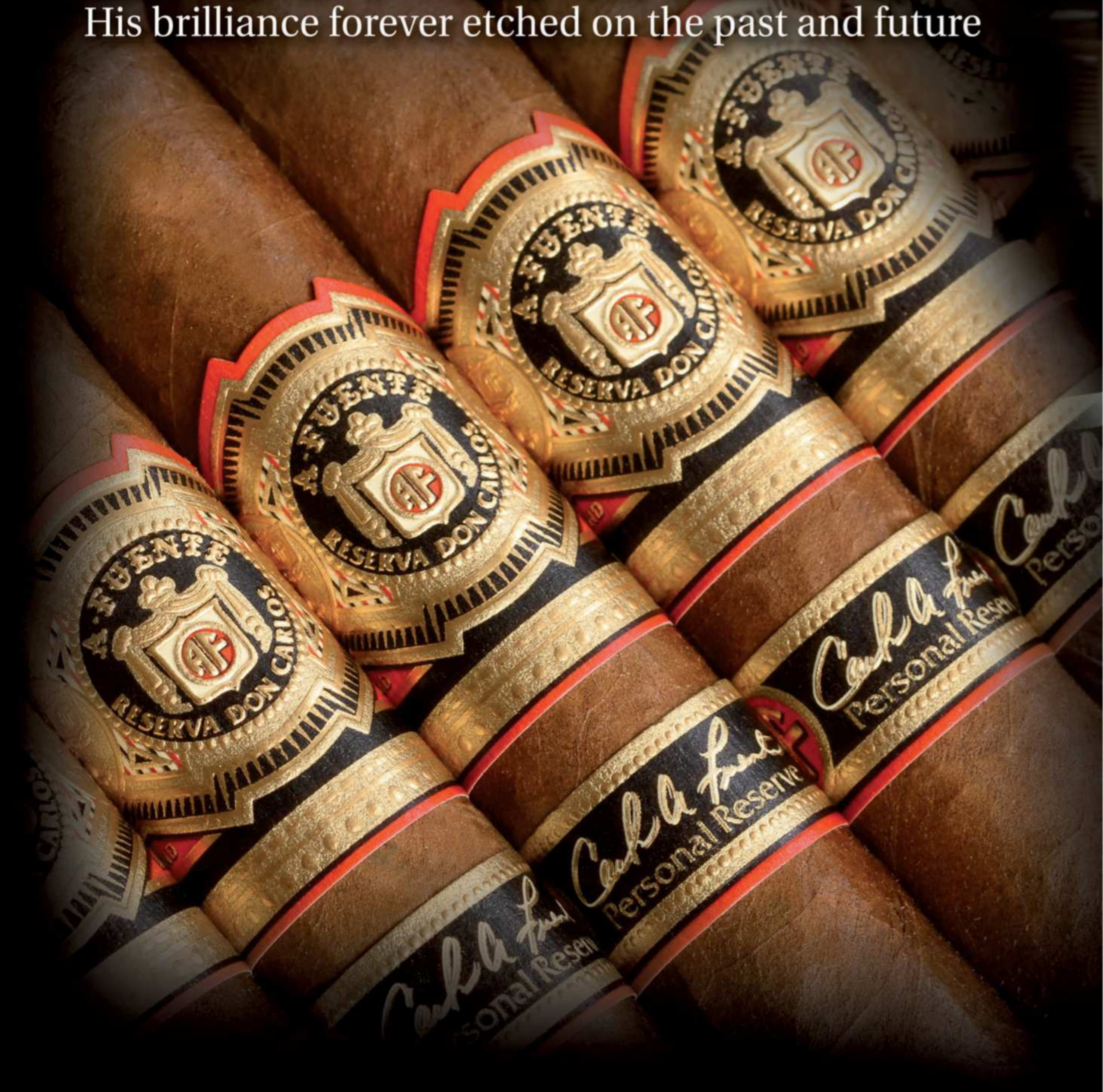
The all new electric Karma Revero.



KARMAAUTOMOTIVE.COM

Arturo Fuente
DON CARLOS

His brilliance forever etched on the past and future



ONE MAN, ONE AMAZING STORY...

"The Man"
Carlos A. Fuente
1935 - 2016

"We will never rush the hands of time"



The Reigning Family Of Premium Cigars
Since 1912

A GLOBAL DESTINATION
for every taste

Hudson Yards is a triumph of culture and cuisine,
of style and sustainability and a convergence
of parks and public space. It's where people will
come together in a new neighborhood to live,
work and play — to enjoy chef-driven restaurants
and shop the world's most iconic brands.

HUDSON YARDS
NEW YORK



eat

D&D
LONDON

estiatorio
Milos



MERCADO
LITTLE
SPAIN

M
MICHAEL LOMONACO

momofuku

rhubarb

SHAKE  SHACK

sweetgreen

THOMAS KELLER

AND MORE TO BE ANNOUNCED THIS FALL

shop

Neiman Marcus


COACH
NEW YORK

FORTY FIVE TEN JO MALONE
LONDON

Kiehl's
SINCE 1851


PATEK PHILIPPE
GENEVE

STUART WEITZMAN

TORY BURCH

WATCHES &
SWITZERLAND
SINCE 1924

ZARA

AND NEARLY 100 LUXURY AND SPECIALTY STORES

live

FIFTEEN
HUDSON YARDS

Two- to four-bedroom condominium
residences under construction
for 2018 occupancy.

917-634-5600
FifteenHudsonYards.com

ONEHUDSONYARDS

A new standard for opulent rental living.
One- to three-bedroom residences
leasing now.

917-634-5573
OneHudsonYards.com/ws

The complete offering terms are in an offering plan available from the sponsor. File No. CD15-0325. ERY South Residential Tower LLC, c/o The Related Companies, L.P., 60 Columbus Circle, New York, New York 10023. Equal Housing Opportunity.

DEVELOPED BY

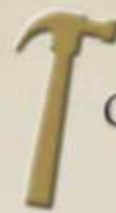
RELATED 
AN OMERS COMPANY

HudsonYardsNewYork.com





Hand



Crafted



José O. Padrón
1964

When you remember life's important moments,
you'll remember a Padrón.

For decades, Padrón smokers have shared with us the stories of special moments in their lives that have been distinguished by smoking one of our cigars. Striving to create great cigars worthy of such special times is our singular motivation, those moments shared with family and friends. The Padrón Family thanks you for your continued loyalty and trust in the Padrón name.

www.padron.com

With knowledge

And our readers
have a thirst for both.



Wine Spectator



Whisky
ADVOCATE

comes enjoyment.



cigar
aficionado

Magazines for people who are passionate.

TO SUBSCRIBE: **goodlife.mshanken.com**

PUBLICATIONS OF M. SHANKEN COMMUNICATIONS, INC.



JOHNNIE WALKER AGED 18 YEARS

Jim Beveridge

JIM BEVERIDGE, MASTER BLENDER



JOHNNIE WALKER

PLEASE DRINK RESPONSIBLY.
JOHNNIE WALKER BLENDERS' BATCH Blended Scotch Whisky.
40% Alc/Vol. Imported by Diageo, Norwalk, CT.



KEEP WALKING AMERICA

JOHNNIE WALKER®

PLEASE DRINK RESPONSIBLY. IMPORTED BY DIAGEO, NORWALK, CT.



GRAN RESERVA LIMITADA

OLIVA

Serie

V

MELANIO
GRAN RESERVA LIMITADA

Serie

V

#1 Cigar of the Year

2014

cigar
aficionado
RATED **96**

OLIVA

Serie V
MELANIO

GRAN RESERVA LIMITADA

Five years in the making,
the Serie V Melanio is sure to exceed
your highest expectations.



www.olivacigar.com

Oliva Cigar Co. 2016

FOLLOW THE LEGEND TO NICARAGUA

Two legends coming together. The extraordinary legacy of Montecristo and the best tobaccos from Nicaragua blended in an exquisite 100 % puro cigar that honors crafting and World's most coveted leaves. A unique smoking experience that reveals the power of the icon, the mystery of nature.

100% Pure Nicaraguan



MONTECRISTO.
NICARAGUA SERIES



Follow the legend at:
www.montecristo.com
@montecristo_usa

SURGEON GENERAL WARNING: Tobacco Use Increases The Risk Of Infertility, Stillbirth, And Low Birth Weight.

contents

september/october 2018

up front

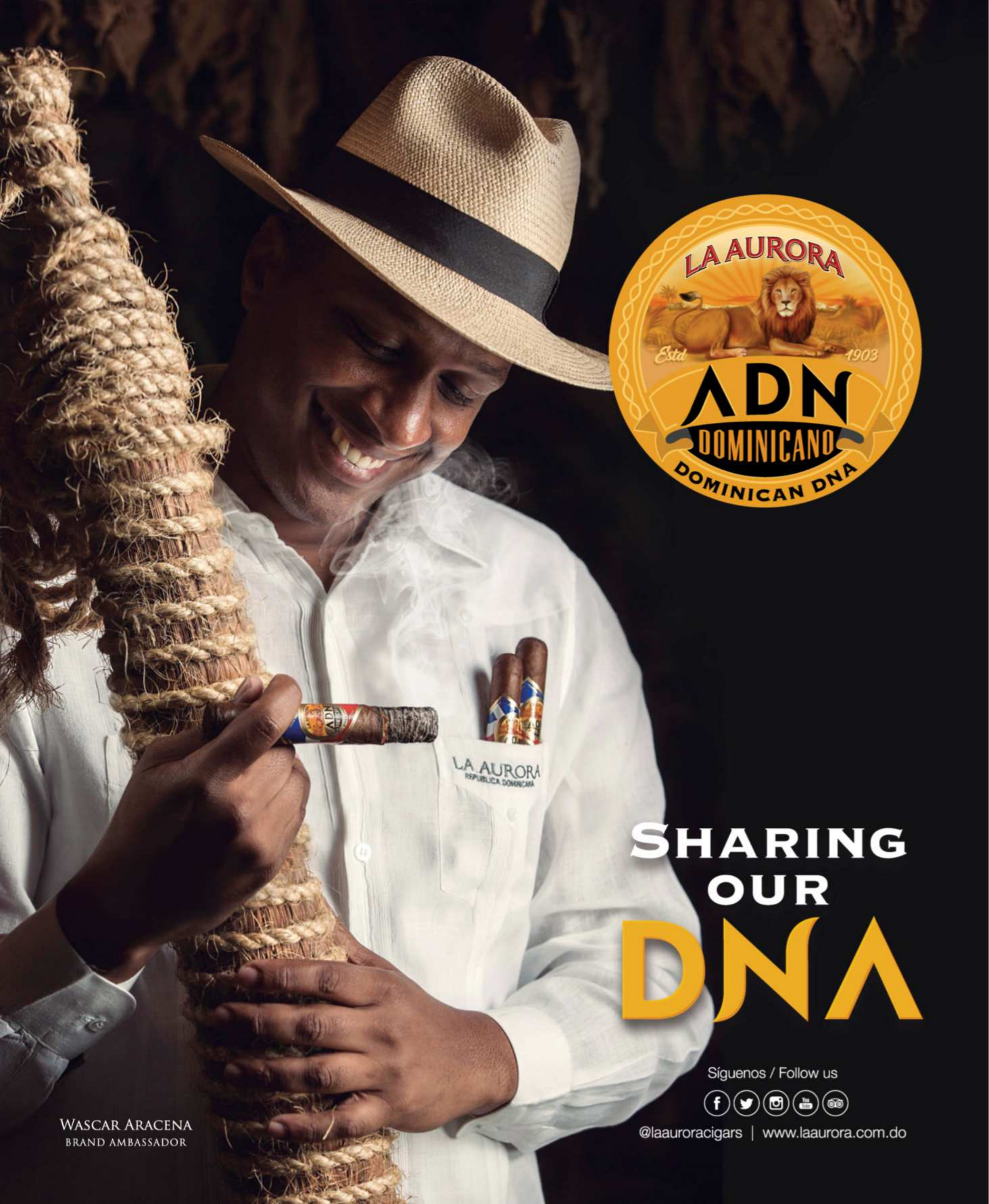
- 20 CIGAR HIGHLIGHTS
- 23 EDITOR'S NOTE
- letters 25 OUT OF THE HUMIDOR
- the best 31 THE GOOD LIFE GUIDE
- 33 PLACES Enjoying Lake Como without the A-list riffraff.
- 34 WHEELS A green ride that's Jaguar fast.
- 36 STYLE The spy who shopped at Savile Row.
- 39 GOURMET Deer me, it's time for venison.
- 40 TIME Watches that voyage to the bottom of the sea.
- 41 DRINK The flavors of autumn in a beer.
- 45 CIGARS Elie Bleu debuts a cigar accessory collection.
- 46 SPORTS Scuba diving: sport or deep sea revelation?
- 50 ELECTRONICS Putting heft back in your keyboard.
- 52 FUN Surviving the Formula 1 experience.

features

- cover 56 DO YOU KNOW ALEX RODRIGUEZ?
In a conversation with CIGAR AFICIONADO editor and publisher Marvin R. Shanken, the legendary baseball player peels back the layers of a complex personality that is part superstar, part businessman and part soul searcher.
- golf 74 THE SUMMIT ON THE GREENS
The Ryder Cup made golf a team sport. We replay the best of the biennial clashes and look ahead to the battle this fall between Europe and the United States.
- NFL 84 PIGSKIN PREVIEW
Our pro football prognosticator gets down to the gridiron nitty gritty to predict which teams will make the postseason and who will bring home the loftiest prize: the Lombardi Trophy.



ON THE COVER
An exclusive interview with A-Rod reveals a complex personality *photographed by David Yellen exclusively for CIGAR AFICIONADO*



SHARING OUR DNA

WASCAR ARACENA
BRAND AMBASSADOR

Síguenos / Follow us



@laauroracigars | www.laaurora.com.do

culture **96** **SMOKING ON-SCREEN**
From Charlie Chaplin to Arnold Schwarzenegger, we look at movie actors who wielded cigars as effective props.

gambling **102** **HARPOONING THE WHALES**
Hooking players who lose seven figures in a weekend is more than sport for casinos, and the lures reach far beyond comp suites. Worm casserole anyone?

spirits **109** **BLENDED BONANZA**
Blended Scotch is the whisky that won the world. Now it's making a comeback with a wave of extra-aged and specially matured drams.

watches **113** **THE YEAR'S 10 BEST**
The watch market has roared back, led by an eclectic top-tier mix. The 10 best range from retro to sporty styles, from mind-boggling to no nonsense.

cigars

tasting **120** We rate 83 cigars in six sizes: Churchills (120), corona gordas (122), figurados (126), lonsdales (128), miscellaneous (130) and robustos (132), plus our new buying guide (134) as well as our vintage cigar tasting, Connoisseur's Corner, (136).

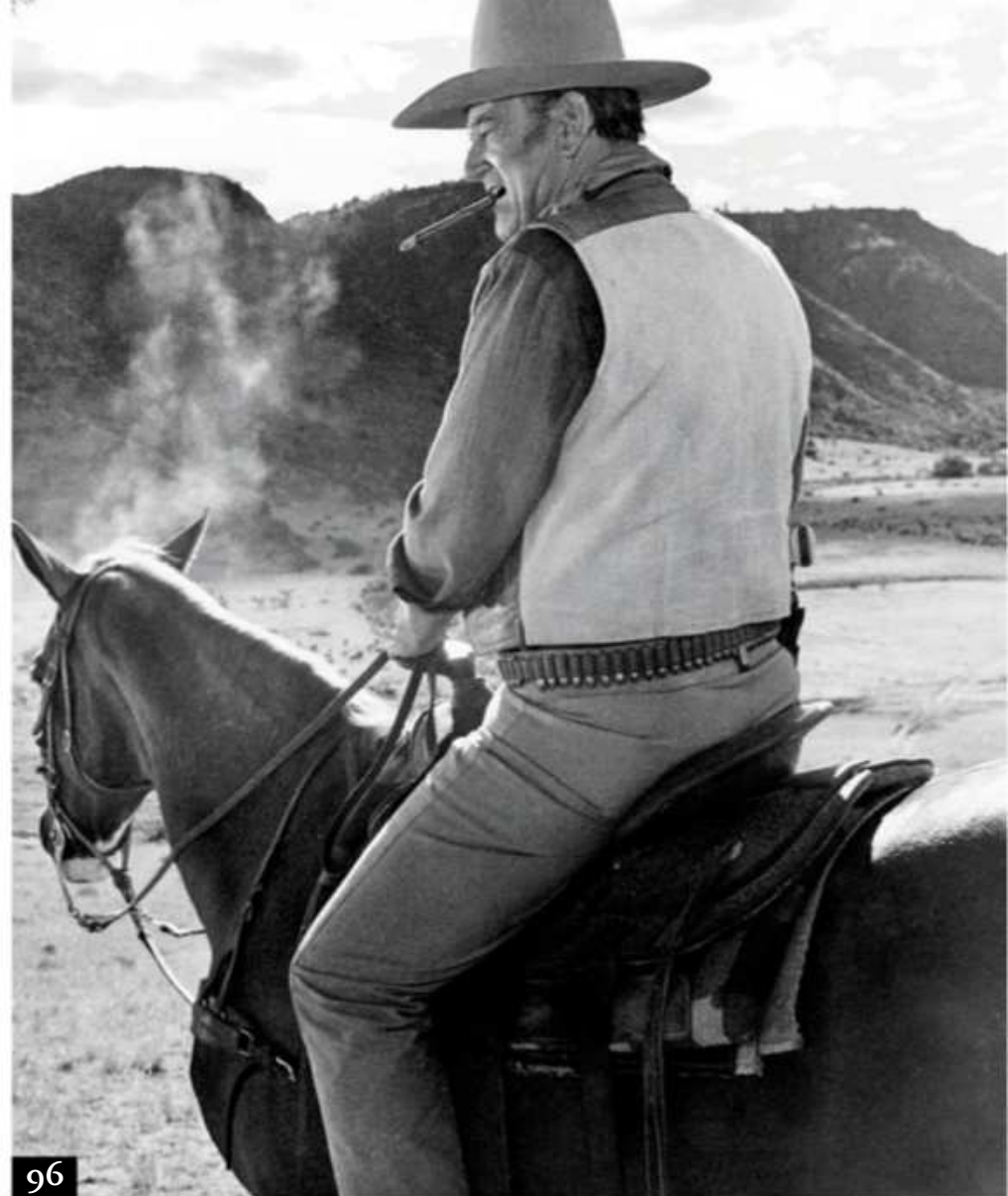
profile **139** **RICH EISEN**
The mirthful face of the NFL Network enjoys a fine cigar, but not when he runs his annual 40-yard dash in a coat and tie at the NFL combine.

interview **143** **HEINRICH VILLIGER**
The head of the family-owned, international cigar giant Villiger Söhne A.G. explains how he came to enter the premium market.

cuba report **149** **CIGAR SOMMELIERS**
Waiters trained in the smoke culture can pair your cigar with the perfect beverage.

152 **MOMENTS TO REMEMBER**
Photos from our readers as they enjoy themselves and their cigars.

160 **MADE FOR YOU**
Cheeky neckties; an all-in-one audio hub in a box; a top-flight Tennessee whiskey tour; two new Leica choices; cuff links for real men; and a cherried out Hummer.



highlights

This was quite a tasting. We reviewed 83 cigars in this issue, 32 of which scored 90 points or higher. Many were rolled in Cuba, but several of the top performers hail from Nicaragua. That Central American country has become a cigarmaking tour de force, and one that can also deliver bargains, like the \$6.25 Oliva that scored 91 points.



TOP CORONA GORDA E.P. CARRILLO ENCORE MAJESTIC

DOM. REP.

93

Rollled in the Dominican Republic with only Nicaraguan tobaccos, this cigar led the corona gordas along with Cuba's Hoyo de Monterrey Epicure Especial.



TOP ROBUSTO VEGAS ROBAINA FAMOSO

CUBA

93

This Cuban is named after the late Alejandro Robaina's famous tobacco farm in Cuba, which is now overseen by his grandson Hirochi.



TOP CHURCHILL ROCKY PATEL VINTAGE 1992 CHURCHILL

HONDURAS

92

This box-pressed cigar tied with the Ramon Allones By AJ Fernandez and Villiger San'Doro Colorado for the top spot in the Churchill category.



TOP FIGURADO MONTECRISTO NO. 2

CUBA

92

This classic, go-to Cuban, our 2013 Cigar of the Year, has become one of the world's most recognizable premium smokes.



TOP LONSDALE COHIBA SIGLO V (TUBO)

CUBA

92

Measuring slightly shorter than 7 inches, this darkly wrapped smoke was part of a three-pack, with each cigar in its own glossy yellow tube.



TOP MISCELLANEOUS ILLUSIONE CRUZADO SHORT ROBUSTO

NICARAGUA

92

This short, stout cigar, a Nicaraguan puro, bursts with flavor and is the perfect smoke to reach for when time is limited.



BEST BUY OLIVA SERIE G CHURCHILL

NICARAGUA

91

Covered in a dark, toothy Cameroon wrapper, this trunk-pressed cigar carries a retail price of only \$6.25.

NAMED 2018
**BEST
SMALL
BATCH
BOURBON**

-SAN FRANCISCO WORLD SPIRITS COMPETITION

Elijah Craig

The FATHER of BOURBON

ELIJAH CRAIG.COM





Clean Air Defined

Official air purifier of the International Premium Cigar & Pipe Retailers (IPCPR)



Effective . Quiet . Stylish . Air Purifiers

For a free catalog call

888.866.8862

www.rabbitair.com/smoke



One-on-One with Alex Rodriguez

Who is Alex Rodriguez? We all know he was a great baseball player, certainly one of the best of all time. Only three people have hit more home runs, he's a 14-time All-Star and a three-time American League MVP. His records are too long to list, but one stands out, hitting 25 grand slams, more than any other man.

As a teenager, when he was drafted No. 1 by the Seattle Mariners, he was already a superstar. Even then people cheered him. But as the years went on, and he moved from the Mariners to the Rangers and then to the Yankees, he began breaking records with his salary as well as his bat. He became a polarizing figure, and some of those cheers turned to boos. And when the question of steroids arose, he first denied ever using them, then finally admitted what he did. Ultimately he was suspended by Major League Baseball for the entire 2014 season.

But something happened after that suspension. He came back to the Yankees with a new attitude, a new energy. He made his peace with baseball and retired during the 2016 season. And while he had a great career as a baseball player, today he's having a sensational second act. Not only is he a talented analyst, talking about the ins and outs of the game on FOX and ESPN, but he's a sharp businessman. Early on in his career, he began investing his money in real estate, and over the years he has built an enviable portfolio of rental properties—15,000 of them. He's shown off his business chops on the hit TV show "Shark Tank," and he's dating superstar Jennifer Lopez.

I met him. I interviewed him. And I got to know the real Alex Rodriguez.

His early life was far from easy. Abandoned by his father when he was just 10, Rodriguez was raised by his mother, who was forced to work two jobs. But hardship ignited a fire in Rodriguez, who determined to use his baseball talents to build a better life for not only himself, but his mother. When he signed his first contract, he proudly told her she would never have to work again.

One of my longtime employees is a die-hard Yankees fan. As I prepared for the interview with Rodriguez, I asked for her opinion of the man. "He owned his mistakes and thanked the fans for putting up with him," she told me. "He embraced the kinetic energy of New York City and helped make the game exciting to watch. He brought crowds to every stadium in the country—even if it was just to boo him. The Yankees won the World Series in 2009 and A-Rod was a big part of that. That makes him a Yankee for life."

I spent several hours with A-Rod in the CIGAR AFICIONADO offices, smoking cigars and talking about his amazing story. To bring this interview to life, we also shot video. Read the interview, which begins on page 56. Watch the videos, which you can find at video.cigaraficionado.com.

I think you'll enjoy getting to know the real Alex Rodriguez.

MARVIN R. SHANKEN
EDITOR & PUBLISHER



ESCAPE TO PARADISE

SAN CRISTOBAL

out of the humidor

Dear Marvin,

As a longtime cigar enthusiast, but more recent reader of your magazine, I was delighted with the latest issue featuring the masterfully cool Matthew McConaughey [“Alright, Alright, Alright,” August 2018]. In my pursuit of becoming an esteemed gentleman in my own right, I have thus far found your sophisticated yet playful publication to be the perfect primer for cultivating a gentlemanly lifestyle.

The recent issue also featured genuine war hero Richard Overton [“112 And Feeling Fine”], who I believe serves as a shining example to young men everywhere and not just due to his loyal affection for a daily stogie. Men like him don’t seem to be manufactured anymore. I like to believe that true gents are conditioned, not unlike newly arrived dry tobacco from storage needing a little activation. They start off dry, unrefined, and closed off, only to be reinvigorated with a touch of genteel flare. After which point they can become a quality finished product full of refinement and depth. CIGAR AFICIONADO provides the essential information for every fun-loving, high-minded individual. Keep up the fantastic work!

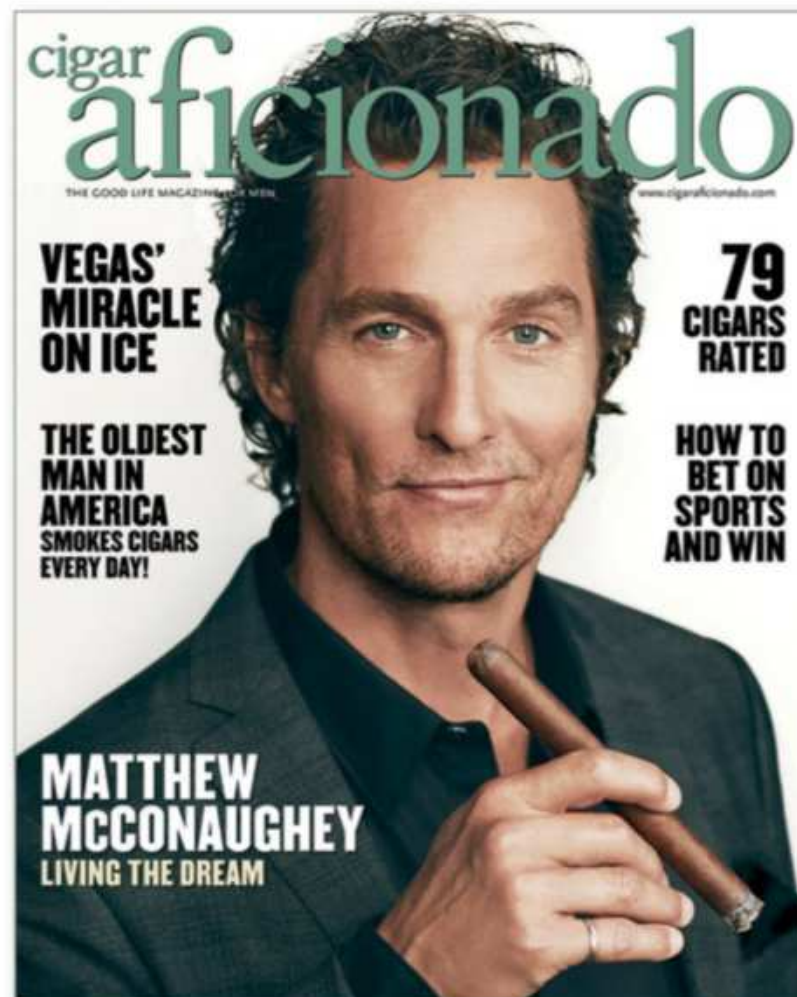
E.M. Lannan

Kitchener, Ontario, Canada

Dear Marvin,

I have been a subscriber to CIGAR AFICIONADO for a few years and really enjoy perusing the articles and the adverts. However, your May/June edition excelled itself. As a longtime fan of the great Sir Winston, your articles about his life (Jon Meacham’s book *Franklin And Winston* is terrific), separating fact from fiction and the movie *Darkest Hour*, was fantastic and highlighted to fellow readers of the magazine some of the personality and sheer brilliance of one of the 20th century’s greatest and most important figures.

Talking of fact or fiction, it seems appropriate to share my favorite Churchill quotation, which one only hopes is true. There is a government position in the U.K. called the “Lord Privy Seal” and Sir Winston was not a big fan of the incumbent. One morning, when he was still Prime Minister, Churchill’s secretary knocked on the bathroom door and said, “Sir Winston, the Privy Seal is



“I have found your sophisticated yet playful publication to be the perfect primer for cultivating a gentlemanly lifestyle.”

—*E.M. Lannan, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada*

on the telephone.” Sir Winston replied “Please tell the Privy Seal that I am sealed to the privy, and I can only deal with one shit at a time!” There really wasn’t anyone like him.

Martyn Fisher

London, United Kingdom

Dear Marvin,

You came out forcefully against Altria’s position against FDA exemption for premium cigars [“America’s Largest Cigarette Company Comes Out Against FDA Exemption For Handmade Cigars,” July 31, 2018, cigaraficionado.com]. Will that forcefulness translate into not testing Nat Sherman cigars or accepting advertisements in CIGAR

CONTACT US **TWITTER** @cigaraficmag • **FACEBOOK** facebook.com/CigarAficionado • **INSTAGRAM** @cigaraficmag
E-MAIL letters@cigaraficionado.com • **LETTERS** 825 8th Ave., 33rd floor, New York, NY 10019 • **EDITORS’ BLOGS** Find out what the editors of CIGAR AFICIONADO are thinking—and smoking—in our editors’ blogs. David Savona, Gordon Mott, Jack Bettridge, Gregory Mottola and Andrew Nagy want to hear from you. The conversation is taking place on cigaraficionado.com.

Printed in the U.S.A.
A publication of M. Shanken Communications, Inc.
Worldwide Plaza, 825 Eighth Avenue, New York, NY 10019
212/684-4224 fax: 212/684-5424 e-mail: letters@cigaraficionado.com

VOL. 26 NO. 6

Editor & Publisher

Executive Editor
Senior Features Editor
Art Director
Senior Editor
Associate Editor
Assistant Editor/Tasting Coordinator
Assistant Editor

Senior Contributing Editor
Contributing Editors

Photo Editor
Associate Art Director
Associate Art Director
Designer
Designer
Promotions Designer
Assistant Photo Editor

Manager, Cigar Aficionado Online
Production Associate, New Media
Director of Digital Media
Site Developer

Senior Vice President, Ad Sales and Services
Vice President/Associate Publisher
Corporate Advertising
Director, Beverage/Alcohol Advertising
Senior Account Manager, New Business
Integrated Marketing Director
Senior Account Directors, West Coast
Account Manager, West Coast
Southeast Advertising Sales
Detroit Advertising Sales
Arizona Golf Advertising Sales
Advertising Events Manager
Advertising/Special Projects Graphic Designer
Sales Assistants

Vice President, Custom Media
Advertising Services Manager
New Media Coordinator

Director of Technology
Lead Developer
Imaging
Prepress

Senior Vice President, Events
Events Director
Senior Events Manager
Events Manager
Senior Vice President, Marketing and Circulation
Senior Circulation Director
Assistant Circulation Manager
Senior Retail Sales Director
Retail Account Manager
Events Marketing Manager

Chairman
Vice Chairman
Senior Advisor to the Chairman
Senior Vice President
Senior Vice President
Senior Vice President
Chief Financial Officer
Vice President, Business Development
Vice President, Production
Assistant to the Chairman

MARVIN R. SHANKEN

DAVID SAVONA
JACK BETTRIDGE
JOHN THOMPSON
GREGORY MOTTOLA
ANDREW NAGY
DAVID CLOUGH
BLAKE DROESCH

GORDON MOTT
PAUL A. EISENSTEIN, MARSHALL FINE, LAURIE KAHLE,
MICHAEL KAPLAN, LARRY OLMSTED, JEFF WILLIAMS

CASEY OTO
TODD MILLER
LISA AURIGEMMA
HENRY ENG
DIANA WITKOWSKI
LISA GEORGE
KARISSA MAGGIO

ANDREW NAGY
EDISON A. LEON
JAMES LAPORTE
ANURADHA UDYAVER

CONSTANCE MCGILVRAY
BARRY ABRAMS
MIRIAM MORGENSTERN
MICHAEL MCGOLDRICK
GEOFF MADDEN
KRISTIN JOHNSON
LINDSEY B. RONALD, CHERYL LEWIS
PAULA COCHRANE
WHEELER MORRISON, GREEN LEAVES MEDIA
CHRISTINE ANDERSON
STEVE BLIMAN
JENNIFER ARCELLA
CHRYSTIE MARINO
JENNY JAIKARAN, MAGGIE KOTRABA

DON GATTERDAM
CHRISTINA CHIAFFITELLA
HILARY CHALSON

MICHAEL TURRO
RICHARD OWENS
SAMANTHA SAFFER, ELI HALPERN
DAVE BOULANGER, ERIC CHEUNG

LYNN RITTENBAND
SUSANNAH NOLAN
LISA GRIBBIN
SHAUNTAY DUNBAR
LAURA ZANDI
PHYLICIA BEDOYA
TINA RATWANI
JEANNE HOLLY
SHIREN FELICIEN
LIZ MOTT

MARVIN R. SHANKEN
MICHAEL D. MOABA
MEL MANNION
CONSTANCE MCGILVRAY
LYNN RITTENBAND
LAURA ZANDI
STEVEN GORDON
JESSICA SHANKEN
KEVIN MULLIGAN
SHEENA DELLANZO

Questions about your subscription? Call 800/365-4929
Questions about your retail sales account? Call 800/344-0763

AFICIONADO for that company's cigars? Will it mean no advertisements in *Wine Spectator* for Ste. Michelle winery? As you pointed out, both are owned by Altria.

James Wilkinson
Sarasota, Florida

Editors' Response: CIGAR AFICIONADO will continue to test and rate Nat Sherman cigars just as before, as our editors deem appropriate. As for advertisements in CIGAR AFICIONADO and Wine Spectator, we shall leave that decision up to the companies that advertise. Whether they do—or do not—advertise has no influence on the ratings they receive in our blind tastings in CIGAR AFICIONADO, and the same holds true for wines reviewed in Wine Spectator, and all M. Shanken Communications publications.

Dear Marvin,

I have really enjoyed reading your magazine. As a lifelong learner, I feel there is always something new you can learn that will make you appreciate even more things in life, especially those things you enjoy. Your magazines have done a tremendous job of growing my appreciation for my favored diversions of wine, Bourbon and cigars.

Your "2017 In Review" [February 2018] was a mind-blowing font of information, breaking down the many factors of creating great cigars. There is one thing that I found curious. Besides discussing origin and brand of cigars, you also discussed size of cigars. You wrote in your article: "lonsdales—another size that is fading." Why do you think that is occurring? Though I am not committed to one cigar or size, I have always felt the lonsdale to be a happy medium, and tend to shy away from sizes that go north of 48 ring gauge. What do you feel are the pros and cons of a lonsdale?

Jay Goad
Franklin, Indiana

Editors' Response: The lonsdale is a relatively slim and rather elegant size that once was considered among the most popular in the land. The Cuban standard is 6 1/2 inches long, with a ring gauge of 42, and perhaps the most famous example is the Cuban Montecristo No. 1. Lonsdales have been pushed aside by robustos, which are shorter (usually five inches or so long) and fatter (a ring gauge of 50), as people have gravitated toward fatter, shorter smokes. Nowadays people are looking for fatter smokes still, with the 60 ring gauge smoke becoming a top seller. We enjoy lonsdales on occasion. For pros, they don't take an enormous amount of time to smoke. For cons, they don't often have the depth of flavor that you'll find in a fatter smoke, such as a robusto. Our advice? If you enjoy them, stick with them. ♦



“A DELIGHTFUL SURPRISE.”

Jim Murray 2018

GLENMORANGIE
LASANTA

AGED **12** YEARS
SHERRY CASK FINISH



Rocky  Patel

Olde World Reserve

Returns



WWW.ROCKYPATEL.COM



Rocky  Patel

Olde World Reserve

MADURO

NICARAGUA

Olde World Reserve

Rocky  Patel

MADURO



ALEC BRADLEY



Rated
96

Prensado | #1 Cigar of the Year - 2011



Rated
94

Tempus | #5 Cigar of the Year - 2017



Rated
93

Coyol | 'Top 25' Cigar of the Year - 2016



Rated
92

Mundial | 'Top 25' Cigar of the Year - 2014



Rated
91

Fine & Rare | 'Top 25' Cigar of the Year - 2012

We don't do it for the ratings.

Alan Rubin
First Generation Cigar Maker



LIVE TRUE.

good life guide

Living well demands that we indulge in things that are of superior quality and excellent origin. This guide aspires to find and recommend the best of everything to aficionados of the good life.

places	33	VILLA D'ESTE, LAKE COMO, ITALY
wheels	34	JAGUAR I-PACE
style	36	THE SAVILE ROW SUIT
gourmet	39	VENISON
time	40	DIVE WATCHES
drink	41	AUTUMNAL BEER
cigars	45	ELIE BLEU ACCESSORIES
sport	46	SCUBA DIVING
electronics	50	RETRO KEYBOARD
fun	52	FORMULA 1 EXPERIENCE



Let the music begin

Aging Room by Rafael Nodal

In Rafael Nodal's love for music lives the essence of the new Aging Room Core Series. Through Connecticut, Maduro and Habano varieties, the master becomes a composer who creates exceptional cigars, like sublime pieces of music reflecting his Cuban roots and life experience.



Follow the music at
www.agingroomcigars.com

SURGEON GENERAL WARNING: Tobacco Use Increases The Risk Of Infertility, Stillbirth, And Low Birth Weight.

©2018 Aging Room Cigars.



Villa d'Este, Lake Como, Italy

Once George Clooney is no longer seen on his Indian motorcycle, braving hair-raising, roller-coaster roads on Lake Como's wishbone-shaped shoreline, other "regulars" at this famed hideaway like Springsteen, John Legend and Madonna also disappear. But so do the crowds, making autumn a fine time to take in the emerald-green waters fed by trout-filled Alpine streams and enjoy the pervasive hedonism.

This is especially true at Italy's Villa d'Este, the palatial oasis located only one hour north of Milan. Blessed with views of the Alps, 25 acres of majestic, terraced gardens, and offering sumptuously furnished accommodations with Murano-glass chandeliers and antique sculptures, the Italian Renaissance-styled Villa has been enchanting guests since 1873.

U.S. presidents, European royalty and movie icons come for a refuge promising pampering and indulgent, unabashed extravagance. But they also crave its serenity against a backdrop of snow-capped mountains and jewel-like hillside towns.

Winston Churchill, who savored *Romeo y Julietas* in the Villa's Canova Bar, gushed over its tranquility and humor. Its cozy intimacy remains, but Romeos have been replaced by Upmanns, Cohibas and Montecristos and smoking now happens on the terrace.

Dining is equally delightful. After a Bellini, there's the jacket-and-tie Veranda or the more casual Grill. DeNiro prefers spaghetti with fresh tomatoes and basil. Clooney also goes for pasta. Autumn is also the time to celebrate fish specialties, whether at the Villa or two exceptional restaurants, Materia in Cernobbio and Locanda dell'Isola Comacina, found on a tiny, bewitching island.

"Fish aggressively go hunting in autumn and that means it's the best time for catching purple-hued Graylings (the salmon family) and trout," says Tom Whieldon, who organizes fly-fishing tours.

The adventurous will be similarly charmed (and frustrated) by the four nearby, hillside golf courses. With their views come devilishly narrow fairways. The severely sloped Menaggio & Cadenabbia is the greatest test of courage, reachable only by negotiating one-lane roads, steep inclines and hairpin turns.

So instead of driving, opt for the memorable luxury of a classic Riva wooden boat taxi to a nearby port. "There's nothing like sitting on the sundeck of a high-powered boat, a glass of Champagne in hand, watching the glassy waters glide by," says Duilio Reina, the owner of Como Classic Boats. "It's living the dream."

Visit villadeste.com/en/

—Ed Kiersh



Jaguar I-Pace

Everything you know is wrong. About battery cars, that is. If you think they're slow and stodgy, cramped, funny looking and boring to drive, well, you need to spend some time behind the wheel of the electrifying new Jaguar I-Pace.

A trip to Portugal's Algarve region during the height of cork harvesting season disproved the misconceptions. The British marque's first battery-electric vehicle endured about every possible test—on road or off—including track time at the Formula One-rated Autodromo Internacional Algarve before wrapping things up with a steep hill climb, and a splash through a stream.

An instant eye-opener as a 2016 concept car, the I-Pace changed little as a production model, and it borrows liberally from the classic Jaguar design book. The most obvious difference is its “cab forward” shape. The batteries, motors and control systems all sit below the load floor instead of under the hood, so they pulled the cabin forward, leaving lots of space for passengers and cargo. Despite the crossover's compact footprint, it has the interior space of the brand's stretch limo.

Mounting that hardware underneath also means a much lower center of gravity, and the I-Pace has the poise of a classic Jaguar sport sedan. It feels more nimble than the brand's two

conventionally powered utility vehicles, the E-Pace and F-Pace, and *is* faster. The twin motors—one on each axle—whir out 394 horsepower and 512 pound-feet of torque. Because electric motors needn't rev up like a gas engine, you'll hit 60 in 4.5 seconds.

Another novel feature is called single-pedal driving. Like all battery cars, I-Pace uses “regenerative” brakes that recapture energy lost during braking and coasting, improving range. Set to maximum regen you simply modulate the throttle to slow down as you weave around corners and, in most around-town situations you can come to a halt without touching the brake pedal.

I-Pace resolves so many battery-electric complaints that it may speed demand. Its 90-kilowatt lithium-ion battery clocks an average 240 miles on a charge. Using a 240-volt charger it takes about 12.6 hours to top off a drained battery, but the new Level 3 public chargers can get an 80 percent range boost in 40 minutes.

The new Jaguar I-Pace starts at \$69,500, with the heavily loaded First Edition model pushing up to \$85,900. By comparison, the F-Pace starts at \$44,600. Then again, Tesla's own Model X SUV has a base price that's \$10,000 more.

Visit jaguarusa.com

—Paul E. Eisenstein

WORLD'S #1 CRISTALINO TEQUILA



CHARCOAL-FILTERED AÑEJO TEQUILA



THOSE WHO KNOW DRINK RESPONSIBLY.
DON JULIO Tequila. 40% Alc/Vol. Imported by Diageo Americas, Norwalk, CT.



Savile Row co-starred in the movie *Kingsman: The Secret Service* when Colin Firth (codename Galahad) introduced his protégé Eggsy to the exigencies of a properly tailored suit.

The Savile Row Suit

When a London street has a 230-year history of tailoring custom-fit clothing for well-heeled businessmen, statesmen and soldiers across the globe, you expect its reputation to be understated. But every once in a while Savile Row makes a higher profile splash that reminds the world of how exquisite its wares are and just how broad its possibilities. For instance, when Hollywood went shopping to dress the spies of the *Kingsman: The Secret Service*, it went straight to the source. Martin Nicholls, tailor for his own Savile Row house as well as Alfred Dunhill, made the memorable suits for the movie as well as its sequel, drawing on not only his fitting prowess, but his real-life experience in adding hidden pockets for the kind of lethal things you'd expect secret agents to carry.

The Row, which built its reputation making military uniforms that eventually morphed into what is now the classic business suit, doesn't follow fashion, but sometimes ends up making it. Because the bespoke suit is essentially a blank canvas, you can

have anything you want. Rock stars of the late '60s visited Tommy Nutter, who made sharply tailored outfits for the likes of the Beatles and Stones. His natural successor is former partner Edward Sexton who now operates on Beauchamp Place. Hardy Amies built a diverse reputation by making everything from dresses for the queen to the space costumes for *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Richard James and Ozwald Boateng are the contemporaries that now wave the fashion-forward banner on Savile Row.

Of course, you can always get the great fabrics and attention to detail (dozens of measurements, several fittings) at more staid outlets like the exclusive Anderson & Sheppard or Huntsman (the storefront that had a cameo in *Kingsman*) with its expertise in plaids. At Henry Poole, where they have paper patterns of all their most famous customers from Churchill to Napoleon III on hand, you can go full-on old-school. They'll replicate antique uniforms for you. You don't even have to be making a movie.

—Jack Bettridge



Simply The Best.

Robusto 5 x 52



Robusto Grande 5 1/2 x 56



Toro 6 x 52



Torpedo 6 1/4 x 52



Churchill 7 x 52



Aniversario 1965

www.natcicco.com

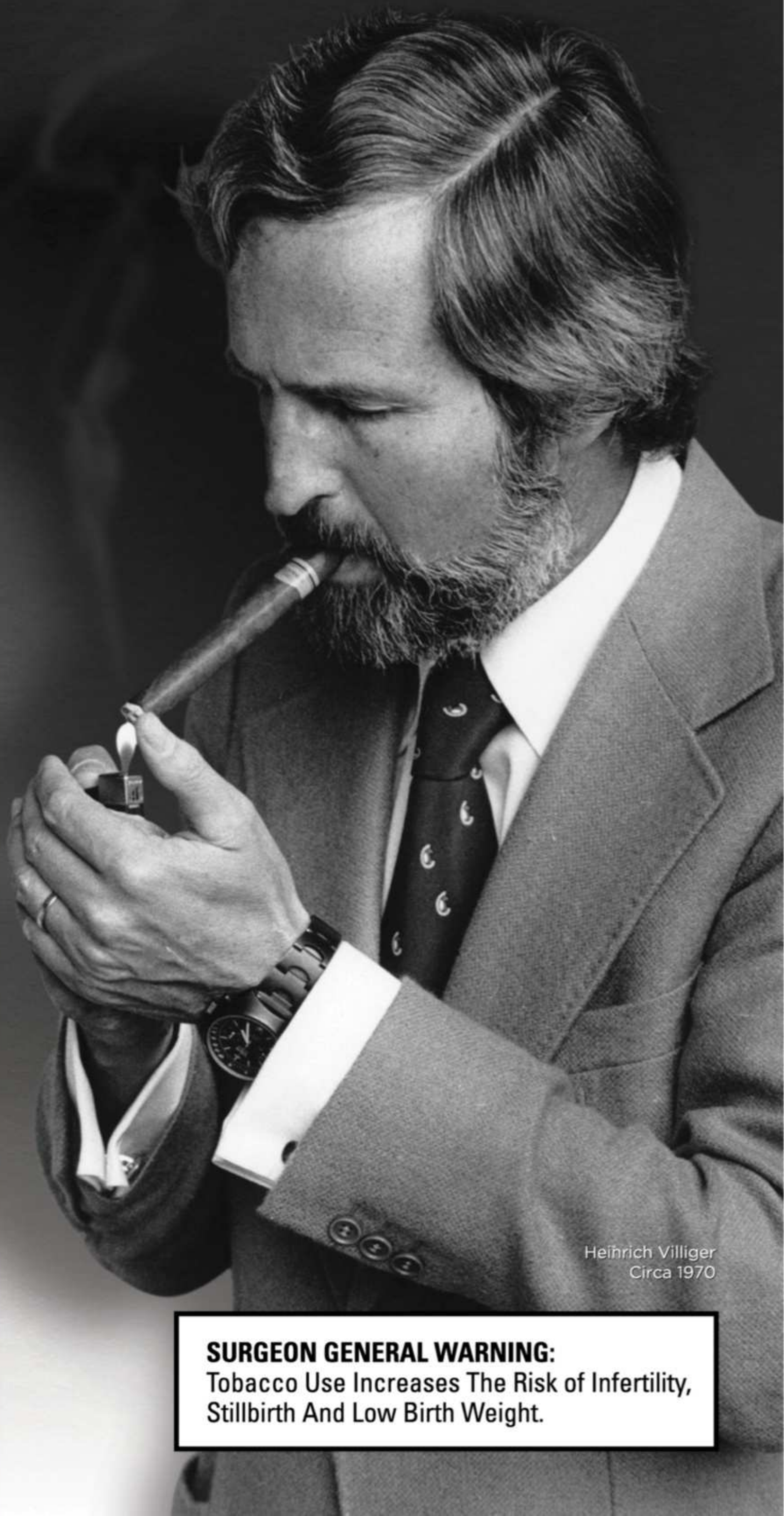




VILLIGER

THE WORLD OF CIGARS

CRAFTING
TOP RATED CIGARS
SINCE 1888



Heinrich Villiger
Circa 1970

SURGEON GENERAL WARNING:
Tobacco Use Increases The Risk of Infertility,
Stillbirth And Low Birth Weight.

VILLIGERCIGARS.COM   
#theoriginalclassic

Venison

Seldom remembered facts: our first Thanksgiving was celebrated in October and turkey was not the only meat course. Venison, or deer meat, a kind of tangy, gamey, musky alternative to beef, also graced the feast—even if it wasn’t as notable to European guests already familiar with its charms.

Autumn remains a natural time to indulge in this storied, if underappreciated, cut of meat. In many parts of the United States, deer-hunting season occurs in the fall (when the animals have matured as well as fattened). However, unless you hunt it yourself or have friends that do, you are unlikely to encounter deer as game meat. Venison bought from a butcher or ordered at a restaurant has been farmed, or ranched, in large fenced in areas and then safely prepared and packaged under USDA regulations.

But certain compensations come with ditching the back-to-our-roots esthetic. This sort of free-range production contributes to a tastier (at least to many modern palates) cut. Farmers use selective breeding to strengthen the herds. The deer still enjoy a steady diet of the things like alfalfa, acorns and wild herbs that contribute to their interesting flavor, but their feed can also be supplemented with protein. The farmed animals aren’t as lean as their wild cousins, owing to a steady diet. Furthermore, while recipes for hunted deer often call for marinating to soften more muscular cuts, when you’re buying farm-raised deer you can select meat that’s already tender.

Farm-raising also makes venison available all year, especially as much of it is imported from New Zealand. Plus, buying this way allows you to choose the most tender cuts. Backstrap is similar to rib-eye steak, while tenderloin is like a filet. We enjoy it simply grilled (medium rare please; well-done venison is notoriously tough) with some black pepper and plenty of salt. While it won’t likely push aside your Thanksgiving turkey, adding it to your autumnal menu will serve as a palatable American history lesson.

—Jack Bettridge





Dive Watches

Like so many men's items from gear to fashion, dive watches come courtesy of the military. In the mid-1930s, Rolex built one for the divers of the Royal Italian Navy. After World War II, scuba became a recreational activity, and the dive watch emerged as a pillar of the burgeoning sport-watch segment.

Omega's Seamaster Professional Diver 300M, born in 1948, just redesigned the 300 collection, which debuted in 1993. Upsized to 42 millimeters, it includes six stainless steel models and eight two-tone (stainless and gold) models. (\$4,750 for steel with rubber strap; \$4,850 for steel/steel; \$6,500 for gold/rubber; and \$9,700 for steel/gold.) A limited edition of 2,500, made mostly of titanium with gold trim, pays tribute to the original with the bezel's base and some band trim fashioned from tantalum (\$13,000). The new conical helium-escape valve is endowed with a patented system that allows for underwater operation. The ceramic bezel has a diving scale in the brand's Ceragold (gold-infused ceramic) or white enamel. Reshaped skeleton hands turn over polished ceramic dials that are laser engraved with the collection's trademark wave pattern. The date window is at 6 O'CLOCK, while the

indexes are raised and filled with luminous Super-LumiNova.

This year, Ulysse Nardin took its Diver collection to extremes with a 300-piece Diver Deep Dive (\$12,000) with water-resistance to 1,000 meters. The brawny, 46-mm titanium watch has a helium-release valve at 9 O'CLOCK for deep dives and a removable titanium crown guard at 2 O'CLOCK. The rubber strap expands to help adjust to swelling wrists during dives, and the notched bezel can be easily manipulated while wearing diving gloves.

For those who style while at great depths, Oris debuted a downsized 39.5-mm version of its classic Aquis Date (\$1,800 on strap; \$2,000 on metal bracelet) with all the requisite dive elements: water resistance to 30 bar (300 meters), a unidirectional rotating bezel for keeping track of dive times, and a high-contrast dial design with Super-LumiNova for legibility even in the murky depths. Of course, many dive watches barely make it off the beach, so the Aquis Date pairs equally as well with jeans as it does with neoprene.

Visit omegawatches.com, ulyssse-nardin.com and oris.ch

—Laurie Kahle

Autumnal Beer

Fall is beer's bridge season between the light coolers of summer and unabashedly boozy warmers of winter as the season's brews conceal a boosted alcohol content behind their combinations of malts and seasonal ingredients.

Beers that are brewed with such traditional fall spices as nutmeg, clove and allspice are the naturals. Cigar lovers looking to pair with suds should abide by a simple rule: the darker the beer, the better. The malts that make beer dark usually impart a natural sweetness that partners well with mild- to medium-bodied smokes.

New Belgium's 1554 Black Lager and Dogfish Head's Indian Brown are regular-production beers that shine in the fall. The 1554 Black Lager boasts fennel and toffee in the nose, with a dose of brown sugar and chocolate in the swallow. Indian Brown belies its India pale ale style by pouring dark brown and offering roasted caramel and brown-sugar notes.

For added alcohol warmth, look to Ommegang's Double Barrel Dubbel (9.9 percent alcohol by volume) and Boulevard Brewing's Bourbon Barrel Quad (11.2 percent). Both brews have been aged for a time in oak Bourbon barrels, with Ommegang also enjoying a slumber in ex-brandied casks. The Double Barrel has notes of vanilla, coconut and molasses, with subtle hints of licorice root and orange peel. Barrel Quad starts off with toffee, clove and vanilla before a cherry finish.

Pumpkin, the king of fall ingredients, is a tasty alternative when done well. Firestone Walker's El Gourd features pumpkins that have been roasted in wood-burning ovens. The roasted pumpkin flavor is subtle in the tart brew, but nutmeg and walnut also show.

Märzenbier, the style traditionally served at Germany's annual Oktoberfest celebration, is paler in color and more sessionable (5 to 6 percent alcohol). Though not officially served at Oktoberfest, Ayinger's Oktober Fest-Märzen is a superb example of the style, presenting malty bread before a bright, biscuit finish. More widely available is Samuel Adams Oktoberfest, a lovely alternative that imparts rye bread and brown sugar notes, with an underlying roasted caramel base.

—Andrew Nagy



Dewar's®

DOUBLE AGED

• FOR EXTRA •
SMOOTHNESS



ENJOY RESPONSIBLY. © 2018 DEWAR'S, WHITE LABEL, ITS TRADE DRESS, TRUE SCOTCH, THE CELTIC DEVICE AND THE JOHN DEWAR SIGNATURE ARE TRADEMARKS. BLENDED SCOTCH WHISKY – 40% ALC. BY VOL. *THIS IS ONLY SPECIFIC TO THE WHITE LABEL PRODUCT.



WE AGE



WE BLEND



WE AGE AGAIN

Dewar's.

What's in a name? In a word, standards. At Dewar's we've made quite a name for ourselves by living true to our standards for over 130 years. That's about how long we have been double ageing our whisky.

Why? For extra smoothness.

It takes longer and costs more but ageing, blending and ageing again is the gold standard when it comes to marrying forty different single malts and grains into one super smooth Dewar's.

LIVE TRUE

For my humidor,
I use Boveda.

ROCKY PATEL
ROCKY PATEL CIGARS



TRYBOVEDA.COM

@bovedainc @bovedainc @bovedausa



© COPYRIGHT 2014 BOVEDA INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Elie Bleu Accessories

Seasoned cigar veterans and casual smokers alike know that the exquisite humidors of Elie Bleu are synonymous with quality and reliability. But for its 40th anniversary in 2016, the French maker wanted to branch out with a company first: cigar accessories in regular production. Because its home operation is not set up for large-scale manufacturing, the company partnered with a factory in Japan to create the four lighters and cigar cutter that the collection comprises. After a limited soft launch two years ago, the collection was further refined and has now been rolled out to more markets.

Built for portability, each piece looks stunning and comes in a variety of finishes. Despite their light weight, the pieces feel solid, durable and, most importantly, work flawlessly.

The EBC-1 double-guillotine cutter (bottom, \$200) sports a stainless steel body with surgical-grade, stainless steel blades. The edges of the blades are not straight, but rather have been tempered to create a diamond when they come together. The maw is large and the blades are sharp enough to handle any cigar you throw at it, even 60-ring grandes.

The aficionado with a minimalist bent will likely gravitate to the J-11 (second from bottom, \$175) and J-12 lighters (top, \$200). Only .31 inches thick, the J-11's single-flame jet, triggered by a slide ignition, gently toasts your smoke. The J-12 lighter, while only slightly thicker, throws a flame like a paint brush to your cigar canvas.

The body casing of the J-14 lighter (third from bottom, \$300) sports a bit of brass covered in a rhodium finish. Flip open its piston-operated cap to reveal a jet flame shaped like a diamond that's wide enough to easily light fatter smokes.

The standout piece is the F-1 lighter (second from top, \$500 to \$850 depending on finish). Instead of a piezo ignition, the F-1 uses good ol' reliable flint for easy replacement. When sparked by the side roller, the flint creates two soft flames that can be adjusted to suit your needs.

Visit eliebleu-usa.com.

—Andrew Nagy





Scuba Diving

I had a revelation the first time I went scuba diving. Actually, it was the second time. My first time I panicked and shot to the surface (only a few feet above me) when I had a common reaction: breathing underwater is the most unnatural of acts.

The second time, when I'd mastered that fear and dove 130 feet, circling an underwater pinnacle teeming with tropical fish and lobster off the Caribbean island of Saba, I had a greater insight. The revelation was this: scuba diving isn't just a sport. It's a sublime form of sightseeing. Instead of a culture of landmarks, you feast your eyes on forests of staghorn coral and undersea mountains and caves as crowded with life—from colorful parrot fish to massive, absurdly graceful manta rays and the occasional shark or barracuda—as Grand Central Terminal is at rush hour.

To have this revelation is easier than you might think. While it requires lots of equipment, several hundred dollars and days of training to win your Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) certification, a PADI certified “resort course” can have you communing with Neptune in three hours for closer to \$100. You learn modest life-preserving skills like clearing your

mask, sucking air from your instructor's regulator if something unforeseen happens and how to avoid the bends. Much of this instruction occurs on dry land, followed by a little quiz. Then you're ready for a guided tour of the deep.

The clear turquoise waters of the Caribbean, off islands such as Curaçao, Bonaire and the Caymans, rank among the world's top diving destinations. Others include the Red Sea and the 2,300-kilometer long Great Barrier Reef off the coast of Australia, the world's largest coral reef system. Don't assume above-ground calamities will foil your plans. I almost canceled a scuba trip to the British Virgin Islands last year after it was clobbered by the category-five Hurricane Maria. However, Keith Royale, of Blue Water Divers, apprised me that the weather was actually a therapeutic respite for the coral reefs and fish populations that are threatened by tourism. “It's amazing what the absence of humans will do.”

And with that I was back to an alien world and one I didn't have to board a spaceship to reach.

Visit bvitourism.com/blue-water-divers and padi.com

—Ralph Gardner Jr.

THE NEW NICARAGUAN LOVE STORY

To create a truly superlative cigar, you must begin with the highest quality and most esteemed tobaccos available. The new Romeo y Julieta 1875 Nicaragua is derived solely of choice, hand-selected leaves, harvested from the rich, volcanic soils of Nicaragua. Throw yourself into the latest chapter of America's love story.

100% Nicaraguan



ROMEO Y JULIETA®

Follow the love story at:
www.romeoyjulietacigars.com
 [@romeoyjulieta_usa](https://www.instagram.com/romeoyjulieta_usa)

SURGEON GENERAL WARNING:
Cigars Are Not A Safe Alternative
To Cigarettes.



LA GRAN OFERTA

LA GRAN

LA GRAN

LA GRAN OFERTA

LA GRAN

OFERTA

MY FATE



MY FATHER
CIGARS

*Celebrating
35 Years*



My Father
LA GRAN OFERTA

305.468.9501 | MYFATHERCIGARS.COM



Retro Keyboard

Back in my youth, I would sit down in front of a massive typewriter made of steel, a heavy and industrial beast so formidable it could have been smelted in a Soviet naval yard. My fingers would find the appointed keys and I'd be off to the races, pecking away as the keyboard sang back to me. The words would flow and the pages would fly.

I never missed the look of that particular typewriter, but its keys were marvelous, tactile and sturdy. Over the years, I have found myself ever more disappointed in computer keyboards. They seemed to evolve in a way directly opposed to cellphones—while the latter have become ever larger (say, is that an iPhone pressed to your ear or a phone book?) the former have grown ever smaller, more flimsy, lacking substance and soul. If you love to write, keyboards that slide around are not your friend.

Enter the Azio Retro Classic. Crafted on a zinc alloy frame, the keyboard is sturdy and stately. Its face is adorned with leather or wood (our preferred choice), and the rounded, metallic keycaps have just the right amount of give and a remarkably cool look.

The keyboard (starting at \$110) looks old, but it has modern features—it's backlit, the height is adjustable and it has all the keys one would expect to operate a computer. The Azio Retro Classic comes in various styles, and works on PCs and Macs. It's not as loud as the typewriters that clacked throughout newsrooms of yore, but it will get you noticed in your office—in a good way. And it makes the copy flow, good for any writer, whether you're a novelist, journalist or just penning a memo to inspire the troops.

Visit aziocorp.com

—David Savona

TINCUP[®]

MOUNTAIN WHISKEY

A few thousand feet above it all, there's a place unlike anywhere else in America. Where the floor is made of rock, the ceiling is made of stars, and the whiskey is unlike any other. Made for people who live for the mountain, and those who dream to be there. Mountain Whiskey.





Formula 1 Experience

Your senses are heightened,” was the enigmatic, but enthusiastic response I got from a friend, a past winner of the 24 Hours of Daytona, when I asked what was the allure of driving 140 mph around a racetrack in the dead of night. However well meaning, it wasn’t very helpful. Of course, your senses are heightened. That’s what happens when you’re afraid of dying.

I was headed to Formula Experiences, a new racecar driving concept at Virginia International Speedway, home of the world’s first open-cockpit, night ride-along. Mingling the fragrance of the Virginia countryside with the smell of petrol, 2G downforces and hurricane-style winds, it is but one of the adventures.

The brainchild of Peter Heffring, a software entrepreneur and amateur racecar competitor, it boasts a fleet of 2018 British Radical SR series and Ligier Formula 4 racecars, the fastest able to reach 173 mph. The idea is to get clients as close as possible to the Formula One or Indycar experience. “This isn’t a race school,” Heffring explains. “It’s a bucket list experience.” I can attest that he achieves that goal, if anything too successfully. When the brakes slammed going into a curve at 140 mph I knew what it would feel like to fly from New York to L.A.—in the open air.

And the course itself isn’t some monotonous oval. It alternates between straightaways and hairpin curves (a couple in rapid succession; one called the Bitch for good reason), and elevation changes that would test even a professional driver’s reflexes.

The one- and two-day sessions (starting at \$1,495) include one-on-one coaching, pro simulator training to help drivers reach top speeds, dozens of laps around the track and a cool T-shirt. I didn’t reach the SR1’s 138 mph top speed. On the other hand I didn’t spin out, crack up cars or lose my breakfast as did several of my fellow drivers (mostly successful businessmen from the Raleigh-Durham area with a surplus of testosterone).

Part of the fun of the spare-no-expense experience—from the equipment to the personnel to the sparkling garage—is the venue, a 1,300-acre luxury racecar driving resort on the North Carolina-Virginia border. “We like to call this the B&B of driving experiences,” Heffring said. After a day tempting mortality it’s nice to know that you can avail yourself of the pool, spa and some excellent Southern cooking.

Visit formulaexperiences.com

—Ralph Gardner Jr.

HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A
BUGATTI?



DISTINCTION CRAFTMANSHIP TRADITION

BUGATTI
Cigars

BOSS
CIGARS

Belstaff

www.bugatticigarsgroup.com

+1 (877) 322-4427



**TOP
10**
cigar aficionado

**CIGARS
OF
2017**

LIGHT UP THE SCENE

You earned it.



PLASENCIA
CIGARS

Perfected over 152 years,
yours to enjoy now.

   #LightUpYourSoul PlasenciaCigars.com





ALEX RODRIGUEZ

Marvin R. Shanken sits down with Alex Rodriguez, one of the most



THE INTERVIEW

talented—and polarizing—baseball players to ever play the game

A

lex Rodriguez was only 10 years old when his father walked out, leaving his mother Lourdes alone to support the family. The young Rodriguez watched his mother—who worked two jobs—struggle with the rent, and he became determined to use his budding athletic talents to give her a better life. He was a star in high school, and skipped college as he was drafted No. 1 by the Seattle Mariners in 1993 at the age of 17. In 22 seasons, he amassed statistics that are the stuff of legend: 696 home runs, 2,086 runs batted in, 14 times named an All Star. Only three men have hit more home runs in a career. No one has hit more grand slams. He was well rewarded for his efforts, signing record contracts with the Texas Rangers and the New York Yankees, and he tasted victory when he and the Yankees won the 2009 World Series.

But Rodriguez struggled at times in the bright light of superstardom. His salary made him a target for criticism, and Major League Baseball suspended him for the entire 2014 season for steroid use. He came back to the Yankees in 2015 with a new perspective on life, and played his final game on August 12, 2016.

Today, Rodriguez is back in the public eye as a critically acclaimed analyst talking baseball on Fox and ESPN. He is dating superstar Jennifer Lopez, appears on “Shark Tank” and is a savvy investor. He bought his first piece of real estate as a young athlete, and today his A-Rod Corp. manages more than 15,000 apartment units, among other business ventures. In mid-June, Rodriguez sat down with Marvin R. Shanken in the New York City offices of CIGAR AFICIONADO for a candid discussion about his life in baseball, his business empire, love of cigars and a great deal more.

SHANKEN: Everybody knows who you are. Nobody knows who you are. Which statement is true?

RODRIGUEZ: In my playing days, pre-suspension, I think they’re both accurate. Post-suspension, people are getting to know me a lot better.

SHANKEN: You live in a fishbowl. How do you handle your stardom? Your need for privacy?

RODRIGUEZ: You know Marvin, that’s a difficult one, because I played for about 25 years, and for such a long time I just hid from it, I ran away from it. I didn’t feel secure that I had to go play baseball and be the best that I can be. I just wanted to play baseball, hit home runs and help my team win championships. And pre-suspension/post-suspension, what I realized was that I needed to make a paradigm shift. Because somebody else was telling my story. And I knew I had made mistakes but I wasn’t a bad guy. But I was being portrayed as a bad guy. And I needed the full year, the sabbatical, to understand

that I better start taking control of my life, of my narrative. Start telling my story. Good, bad or ugly, just be real, just be honest and then take your chances. Because people hate you and it’s not even you. At least be yourself. If they’re going to hate me, hate the real me.

SHANKEN: I’ve asked a lot of people about you. Most of them have never met you. Some love you, some hate you. What advice would today’s Alex Rodriguez, you, give to the 17-year-old Alex Rodriguez who was drafted by the Seattle Mariners?

RODRIGUEZ: I would say: think a lot. Act slow. Surround yourself with the greatest people you can find. You know we talk about collecting cigars, we talk about collecting art, some people collect cars. I think the greatest collection you can build is of people. People of character. People with integrity. People that are much, much smarter than you. In a sense, I know people say this all the time, but it’s true: you are an average of the five people you hang out with the most.

SHANKEN: You’ve said that you came back from the suspension a different person. Tell me how you are different.

RODRIGUEZ: What I wanted to do in that year of suspension were three things. No. 1, I needed to heal physically and emotionally. I had two hip surgeries, two knee surgeries. My mind was a mess. I was exhausted and I just needed to rest. I disappeared to the Maldives for two weeks. I was completely on my own. The other thing I wanted to do was continue to get educated. I enrolled in business school at Columbia, I enrolled in the University of Miami, the business school. And then the third thing I needed to do, and most importantly Marvin, was get therapy. I wanted to understand why I kept beating myself. I was a pretty good guy making these dumb, silly decisions. And I wanted to dig into my childhood. My father left when I was 10. And I wanted to get a grip on that.

SHANKEN: I understand that you were searching for redemption. Who helped you?

RODRIGUEZ: It was such a tough and embarrassing time, what I had done to myself. For a while there, I played the victim. For a while I wanted to point fingers. There was no one to blame.

SHANKEN: But when you were at your lowest low, was there anyone that you leaned on to help you stand up?

RODRIGUEZ: Yeah. It was family. It was my mother, it was my brother Joe, it was my sister Susy. My daughters were incredibly supportive. And a collection of friends that I have who have been around since I was eight years old. And some people ran fast and some people dug in their heels and became even closer to me. I wrote down on a piece of paper about 10 names, people that I admired greatly. I wanted at my lowest point—in a world of Instagram, and emails and texts, where it’s so easy to just send a message over email—I wanted to talk to everyone. I wanted them to hear my voice, when I was weakest and most vulnerable. And to this day, they’re all my friends, they’re all my partners, and they say that was the most impressive thing I’ve done in my entire career.



Rodriguez at bat in 2013, breaking Lou Gehrig's grand slam record.

WATCH THE VIDEO A-Rod talks about the Hall of Fame and more at video.cigaraficionado.com

SHANKEN: I read a lot of articles as background, and I never found the answer to a simple question. Did you ever look inside and ask yourself why?

RODRIGUEZ: I think, in simple form, I didn't think I was enough. And today I do.

SHANKEN: If your obituary does not list you as a member of the Hall of Fame, how does that legacy mark your career?

RODRIGUEZ: There's rules, and you have to follow the rules. I made those mistakes, and at the end of the day I have to live by those mistakes. Whether I get in or not—and let's be clear, I want to get in, I hope I get in, I pray I get in—if I don't, I think I have a bigger opportunity yet again. And the platform of my mistakes, the good the bad and the ugly, has allowed me to have a

loud voice to the next generation, to say when in doubt, just look at my career. Look at the good, look at the bad, look at the ugly. And just make good decisions, have the power of restriction that I didn't have. The other message is, maybe I'm not a Hall of Fame player, but I get a chance to be a Hall of Fame dad, a Hall of Fame friend.

SHANKEN: This Sunday is Father's Day. Take me back to Father's Day weekend in 2000, when you hit two home runs [with your father, Victor, in attendance].

RODRIGUEZ: My father wasn't around for a large portion of my life. It was really important for me to have one Father's Day. I wanted closure. I also wanted to know that it wasn't my fault that my father left. It was very confusing as a 10-year-old

boy. I always thought he would come back. We were in Miami, I lived with my mother, my brother Joe, my sister Susy. And he left to New York. And it was my understanding that he just didn't like Miami. So I felt it was just going to be three months or six months and dad was going to come back. And he never came back. I didn't understand how painful that was. And I just clouded it with playing baseball, trying to get good grades and earn my scholarship to schools. But when you fast forward to 2000, I knew he was getting older, so I didn't know how much longer he would be around. And I picked Minnesota because it's a very low-key city. And we didn't stay in the team hotel, we stayed in another hotel. I wanted to be able to connect and not have anybody see

NEW |  | Glenfiddich.

CAMPFIRE
SMOKINESS



TOFFEE
SWEETNESS

NO.4 IN THE GLENFIDDICH EXPERIMENTAL SERIES

Glenfiddich has long pushed boundaries and challenged traditions. Never has this been more evident than with Fire & Cane. It's a bold fusion of campfire smokiness with oak and peaty notes, finished in Latin rum casks to produce a surprising toffee sweetness.

us together. I sent him out to get three suits 'cause he always wanted to be in a suit. And he came to four games. And on Father's Day I had one of the greatest offensive days of my career. And I always thought the Good Lord up there was just looking down and saying this one is from me to you. It was a day that I'll never forget. My father passed about three years ago. But going back to that day—I'm at peace with it.

SHANKEN: Did you ever reconcile further? Or was it just that particular moment?

RODRIGUEZ: It was basically that moment. And it was a pure moment. It was four days. That entire series I was playing like with my hair on fire, like I had a superpower. I was a skinny kid, I was in my early 20s, and it was so much fun, 'cause I knew how much my dad loved baseball. And I was kind of showing off and putting on a show for him.

SHANKEN: He was a baseball player in the Dominican Republic. When you were a kid, do you remember him teaching you, playing with you? Throwing the ball?

RODRIGUEZ: No, because he was older. But what I do remember was sitting on his lap as a toddler and listening to [Yankees announcer] Phil Rizzuto and [Mets announcer] Ralph Kiner.

SHANKEN: Did he ever look you in the eye and say, "Here's why I never called you, I never came to visit you, I opted out of your life?"

RODRIGUEZ: No. If I had the tools that I have today, it would have been a much different conversation, and a lot more pointed questions. As a young, 20-year-old with the world moving so fast, I was happy for the win.

SHANKEN: One of many quotes that I picked up from you is "I miss my four at-bats every day, I miss the fans, the clubhouse and the boys, but I don't miss the travel, I don't miss waking up in pain every day." That pretty much sums up a lot of things. I asked a Yankee fan about A-Rod and she said, "He brought crowds to every stadium in the country, even if it was just to boo him. Nothing was more fun

than watching an away game and seeing the whole place go nuts when A-Rod came to bat." Do you remember those days?

RODRIGUEZ: Oh yeah. That part of it I loved. There's no greater compliment than having 50,000 people on the road booing you. It was a form of respect. With that said, there's nothing worse than getting booed by 56,000 people at home. And those who say they don't hear it, they're bullshitting you. They hear it, and it doesn't feel good.

"Somebody else was telling my story. I knew I had made mistakes, but I wasn't a bad guy."

WATCH THE VIDEO Rodriguez describes living in the public eye at video.cigaraficionado.com



SHANKEN: When you were in high school in Florida, playing baseball, you must have had a team that you really wanted to play for. Who was that team?

RODRIGUEZ: The Mets. Growing up, there were three cable channels. You had WOR where you could watch the Mets, there was TBS and the Atlanta Braves, and every so often we had WGN with Harry Carey and the Cubs. For me, it was the Braves and the Mets.

SHANKEN: So when you got drafted by Seattle, did you care where you were going? Or were you just happy to be drafted No. 1?

RODRIGUEZ: I did care, because I said boy, this is the farthest place from Miami. I wanted to be drafted by the Dodgers so my mother could drive to see me in spring training. Seattle was the biggest blessing in disguise for me.

SHANKEN: And then, to Texas. [Rodriguez signed a 10-year, \$252 million contract with the Rangers in 2000, a record at the time.] Forgetting about the money—maybe you can't forget about the money—was that a welcome place to go, or was that a worthwhile place to go?

RODRIGUEZ: It was worthwhile and I learned a great deal. I thought that with Tom Hicks as an owner, we had endless potential to turn that market around. It didn't work out that way. I had three very

good years. The team didn't do so well. And then Tom ran into some liquidity problems, and asked me "do you mind if we shop you around?" And I gave him a list of three or four teams, and the process started.

SHANKEN: There's been speculation that your first choice was Boston. And that Boston wanted you, you wanted Boston, but the union wouldn't allow it and that's how you backdoored into the Yankees. Is that a true story?

RODRIGUEZ: That's a true story. What happened was, the commissioner at the time gave us a window for John Henry, the general partner of the Boston Red Sox,



An emotional Rodriguez at his final game in 2016 (above), with daughters Natasha and Ella and mother, Lourdes. Right, the 1993 phone call from the Mariners that made him baseball's No. 1 pick.

and Theo Epstein [then the general manager of the club] to talk to us for about 72 hours. And right here [in New York], around 2:30 in the morning, I had about a three-hour meeting with Theo Epstein and Jed Hoyer. They're now both with the [Chicago] Cubs. And we basically kind of went through this thorough plan of the organization, the team, how does it look today, how will it look in the future, and we were doing mock lineups. And the three of us, in our late-20s, all baseball nerds, just were thrilled. And the deal was done. There's a



contract out there with Theo's signature and my signature. When we took it to the union, they said, "There's no way you can concede giving this money back, it will set a bad precedent," and they basically kiboshed the whole thing.

SHANKEN: And then how did it become the Yankees?

RODRIGUEZ: So a few weeks later I'm collecting my MVP award, right here in New York, and I'm sitting next to Brian Cashman [general manager of the New York Yankees] of all people. And Brian starts saying 'boy I'm glad that deal didn't go through, we were sweating over here.' And I'm like 'yeah, I can tell you I was really disappointed.' I was a shortstop, had just won the gold glove, had just won the MVP, and I thought going up against the Yankees, they had a great team, they had a great shortstop in Derek [Jeter] and I thought it would be a little bit of the Magic-Bird thing and it would be great for baseball. Obviously it didn't turn out that way. At the time I say, let me get a vodka club soda please, and Cash gets a drink, and he goes 'boy, I tell you, if you ever consider playing third base maybe this is a good place for you.' And that turned into, a couple weeks later, a press conference of me becoming a Yankee.

SHANKEN: So I need to go back before I go forward. I'm going to read off a few names and you tell me who they are. Vinny Testaverde. Ken Dorsey. Jim Kelly. Gino Torretta. Bernie Kosar. Steve Walsh.

RODRIGUEZ: Alex Rodriguez next. [laughs]

SHANKEN: Why do I bring that up?

RODRIGUEZ: All great quarterbacks, legendary at the University of Miami. When I signed my scholarship for the University of Miami it was to be quarterback and to play shortstop. I always wanted to play quarterback for the University of Miami.

SHANKEN: Did you stop playing football because you never had any serious interest, or were you just so in love with baseball?

RODRIGUEZ: Well I certainly wanted to play football, and the plan was that if I chose to go the NCAA route I would have played football and baseball. Once I decided to sign as the No. 1 pick in 1993, well then I just wanted to put all my energy and focus into baseball.

SHANKEN: So you never really seriously considered going to college?

A-Rod by the Numbers

He hit more home runs than all but three other men, and drove in more runs than all but two. When Alex Rodriguez walked to the plate, some cheered, some booed, but no one looked away. You knew you were in for a show.

He came into the league as a tall, skinny 18-year-old with a powerful right-handed swing, drafted No. 1 by the Seattle Mariners. "From the prom," he says, "to Fenway Park." He wasted little time making an impact. In 1996, his first full season as Seattle's shortstop, he batted .358, the highest average by a right-hander in the American League since Joe DiMaggio in 1939. He moved to the Rangers and finally to the Yankees, where he also switched to third base. "He's a weapon," said Yankees manager Joe Girardi in 2010. "Every time he steps up to the plate, everyone is in scoring position." When he played his last game on August 12, 2016, the record book was filled with his name. More grand slams than anyone else in Major League Baseball history. The most home runs in a single season by a shortstop—and a third baseman. The youngest to hit 300, 400, 500 and 600 home runs.

His numbers alone seem to pave the way for easy entry into the Baseball Hall of Fame, but a season-long suspension for steroids in 2014 casts doubt on what would have otherwise been a shoo-in to the illustrious group. He will become eligible for induction in 2022, when his fate will be in the hands of the voters. Said Yankees pitcher CC Sabathia of A-Rod: "I think he's probably the best player of our generation."

—David Savona

696
Home Runs
No. 4 all time

52

Most home runs by
a third baseman in
one season

2,086
RBIs
No. 3 all time



2-Time
Gold Glove
Winner

57

Most home runs by
a shortstop in one
season



25

Most career grand
slams of all time

14
All-Star
Appearances

Led American
league in home
runs 5 times

Youngest player to
hit 300, 400,
500 and
600
home runs

2009
World
Series
Champion

3-Time
American
League
MVP



La Historia

*Destined to be Another Family Heirloom.
Join us in Our Story.*



CARRILLO

To explore the world of E.P. Carrillo Cigars visit www.epcarrillo.com.

@epcarrillo_cigars

@EPCarrillo

facebook.com/epcarrillo

EPCarrilloCigars

Photo: Alvaro Mata



The day Rodriguez became a New York Yankee, February 17, 2004. With Yankee legends Joe Torre, Reggie Jackson and Derek Jeter.

RODRIGUEZ: The plan was to go to college, and the negotiations got so tight at the end that my mom and I were completely committed—with many hours of conversations—to go to Miami for three years and then reenter the draft in 1996. At the very last moment the Mariners made their last pitch. The negotiations were at a long table like this, and I'm 17 and I don't know what the hell I'm talking about, I say, "I want my mother to have three first-class tickets to be able to visit me during the summer, because I should be a freshman in Miami and I'm going to be a freshman somewhere in Seattle." They said done deal, and I became a Mariner.

SHANKEN: Tell me what you remember about growing up, first in New York, then in Dominican Republic then in Miami with your mother.

RODRIGUEZ: New York was a great place to be as a young boy. I remember my brother always being out playing with rubber balls and stickball. Then I was kind of sad and bummed that at the age of four we headed down to the Dominican

Republic. My mother wanted me in a safer environment. We went to the Dominican and I had a great time there. My father was happy and my mother was happy. And a lot of my baseball, my DNA, came in those four years. It made me gritty, it made me really appreciate a lot of things. And then when we landed here, at the age of 8 or 9, one of the first things I did was join the Boys & Girls Club [in Miami]. I thought I had walked into Princeton campus or Harvard. It was so nice—they had new balls, great aluminum bats. I was just so happy, so grateful. And that was kind of the start of my formal baseball life.

SHANKEN: Tell me who Eddie Rodriguez is and was.

RODRIGUEZ: Eddie Rodriguez was the director of the Boys & Girls Clubs [of Miami], and still is. He was the first coach that I had here when I got to Miami. And they call him The Rooster, in Spanish *El Gallo*. It was because he was feisty. He wanted to fight everyone. I loved him. He was really tough, tough love from day one. In many ways he was like Lou Piniella, my

first manager in pro sports. Eddie is a real hero, he's dedicated his whole adult life to Boys & Girls Clubs. And I would say we've had over 25 Major League Baseball players come out of his program. It's phenomenal work.

SHANKEN: Was he your father figure?

RODRIGUEZ: I think I had two or three father figures. Eddie Rodriguez is No. 1—

SHANKEN: And he's not a relative, just for the record.

RODRIGUEZ: I think I was fortunate to have Rich Hoffman, who was my high school coach at Westminster, and then the third one was a gentleman who was very instrumental in my life, J.D. Ortega Sr. His son is like my brother. He's a pitching coach with the University of Miami. Those are the three mentors, father figures, who replaced my father.

SHANKEN: When you were in high school, before you were drafted, what were your dreams?

RODRIGUEZ: To get out of the hood. I

wanted a scholarship badly. I knew I wanted a better life. I saw my mother, after my father left the house when I was 10, and I saw her take on a second job. She was a secretary in the day and served tables at night. And she was only able to go to a handful of games in my entire Little League career and I wanted very badly to do well, to be able to help her. Then in 1993 when I signed my first contract, the first thing I did was buy her a house, and I bought her a car. And I said, “mom, you no longer have to work anymore.” She quit both jobs and she hasn’t worked ever since.

SHANKEN: Let me read you a list of names. Babe Ruth, Lou Gherig, Mickey Mantle, Joe DiMaggio. Alex Rodriguez.

RODRIGUEZ: [long pause] Pretty cool. We’re all Yankees. We’re all champions. Being a Yankee—there is really nothing like it. It’s such a surreal experience, and I don’t want to be corny but when George Steinbrenner brought me over in 2004 from the Rangers, I felt such great pride. Pre-suspension, I didn’t really understand or value the privilege to put on the pinstripes everyday. I didn’t understand how grateful I should have been. And post-suspension, I remember one day I was 40 years old, 10 minutes before the game, we’re at home, the new stadium, and I look in the mirror and I said, “holy shit. I’m wearing pinstripes. I’m a Yankee.” The same names you just rattled off. They wore this exact same uniform. And here I am at 40 years old, hitting third for the New York Yankees. Hitting 33 home runs. Going back to the postseason, and it’s the same uniform that I wore as a child at the Boys & Girls Club. And I think that connection for me, and that appreciation, it kind of started this anew.

SHANKEN: You were good friends with Derek Jeter, then you weren’t good friends with Derek Jeter. Where does that relationship stand now?

RODRIGUEZ: So, Derek and I are friends. I’ve known Derek since we were 15 years old. I remember he came to a University of Miami game. He had signed with Michigan. I looked up to Derek because he was one year ahead of me. He bypassed the University of Michigan, of course became a Yankee then a five-time world champion

and the rest is history. I entered the big leagues as an 18-year-old. I basically went from the prom to Fenway Park. And we were very, very close. When I came to New York I would stay at his place, when he came to Seattle he would stay at mine. And like all relationships, there’s ups, there’s downs, there’s ups, but where it sits today is where it’s always sat—with respect. I have a lot of love and admiration for Derek, and he’s a five-time world

“There’s no greater compliment than having 50,000 people on the road booing you. There’s nothing worse than getting booed at home.”

WATCH THE VIDEO A-Rod talks about cigars and investments at video.cigaraficionado.com



champion and what I remember most about our relationship is he’s one of the greatest competitors, consummate professionals I’ve ever been around. And we were world champions together in 2009.

SHANKEN: So we’re going to get into your business, but before we do that, I am—and probably a lot of my readers—an avid fan of “Shark Tank.” How did it happen?

RODRIGUEZ: “Shark Tank”—this thing is a juggernaut. It’s been one of the greatest shows ever. There’s been over \$100 million deployed out there in businesses. It’s created more than 10,000 jobs. And I would

venture to say that it’s made more entrepreneurs than all the Ivy League schools combined over the last 10 years. And from my daughters, to my mother, to my friends to you, everyone loves “Shark Tank.”

SHANKEN: How many times have you been on?

RODRIGUEZ: I’ve been on, I believe, four shows. And actually on Thursday, I’m going to go back to film for Season 10.

SHANKEN: How many times a year will you be part of it?

RODRIGUEZ: I’m hoping for at least four for Season 10.

SHANKEN: Have you made any investments?

RODRIGUEZ: I’ve made three or four

investments. One I bought with Mark Cuban. We actually bought into a good company called Ice Shaker. Our partner is Gronk, [Rob] Gronkowski [of the Patriots]. Rob’s brother has a finance background and has done a great job marketing this thing. And since Mark and I bought into this business it’s probably gone up 2,000 percent. So we’re very happy with that investment.

SHANKEN: One of the things I’ve heard, a lot of the deals that are done on camera don’t actually close.

RODRIGUEZ: That’s accurate. Fifty or 60 percent is where it lands. I know I bought



His playing days are behind him, but Rodríguez remains in the public eye. Above, on the hit show "Shark Tank," and at right in front of the paparazzi with Jennifer Lopez.

four companies, and our due diligence process, we've closed on two.

SHANKEN: Let's talk a little bit about cigars. Do you remember when you had your first cigar?

RODRIGUEZ: I don't remember my first cigar, but the first time I made a pivot from liking cigars to loving them was while playing golf with Michael Jordan.

SHANKEN: Oh, Michael's going to read this—he's going to smile.

RODRIGUEZ: So not only does Michael sell sneakers—I saw where he's doing \$3 billion in sales in your interview [December 2017]—but he's a good ambassador for cigars. It was a Hoyo de Monterrey Double Corona.

SHANKEN: Did you get sick?

RODRIGUEZ: I didn't.

SHANKEN: How many did you have the first time?

RODRIGUEZ: Just one. And boy I just fell in love with it. Then I couldn't find them, they were hard to find for me.

SHANKEN: How many years ago was this?

RODRIGUEZ: Oh boy, it had to be around 2000, '99. I love having a cigar when I get home—especially when I'm in Florida—and

I sit out by the pool and I turn on the Yankee game. I got to make sure my girls are asleep.

SHANKEN: Do you have any favorites?

RODRIGUEZ: Hoyo de Monterrey is my favorite.

SHANKEN: Have you ever had a pre-Castro Cuban?

RODRIGUEZ: Nope.

SHANKEN: Would you like one?

RODRIGUEZ: I would love one.

SHANKEN: [slides him a pre-Castro Don Candido cigar.] I'm going to have one myself.

RODRIGUEZ: Can I tell you about the best cigar?

SHANKEN: Up until now?

RODRIGUEZ: Well, I'm going to tell you before I light up. It's 2009, we [the New York Yankees] win the World Series and our entire team goes to a club called One Oak. It's downtown, right here in New York City. And we closed the place down. Then we went and had some pizza at one of these open pizza places at five or six in the morning. And right outside, we lit up some cigars. And we thought about that



entire year. And for me it was a 15-year wait to be a world champion. That's the best cigar I've ever had.

SHANKEN: So let's talk about business and charity. I was very pleasantly surprised to learn that you have many different businesses. How did that come about?

RODRIGUEZ: It started out of fear. I saw some data points that scared the crap out of me. What I saw early on was that the average career is five-and-a-half years for baseball. You make 90 percent of your lifetime earnings from age 20 to 30. And of the 750 players that are in the Major Leagues, less than 5 percent have a college degree. And I'm not a stock broker, but with that information alone I would short that stock. So I didn't want to be one of those numbers. Early on, I said I wanted to buy real estate. And I remember my



Before he played Major League Baseball, Rodriguez was also a standout quarterback. Here he talks University of Miami football on ESPN with Rece Davis (far left) and Lee Corso.

first down payment for a duplex in Miami that I bought near the water. I bought it for \$250,000, and I needed about a \$48,000 down payment. I didn't want to go into my small savings, because I didn't have a lot, so I remember selling two watches. Because of course when you sign as a first round [pick] in Miami, the first thing you do is you buy a Rolex. So I was able to sell that Rolex. And then I did a car signing, and collected enough. Took my down payment and bought it. And then a couple of years later I sold it for double. And I said boy that's pretty good. And over time we got our portfolio to be about 15,000 apartment units in 14 states.

SHANKEN: Fifteen thousand. You must have partners—that's a huge portfolio.

RODRIGUEZ: When we first started I didn't have any partners, and then a great friend of mine from Miami, who was in the health care business, Ray Corona, became my partner.

SHANKEN: So these are all rental units, with cash flow?

RODRIGUEZ: All rentals, all cash flow, all non-recourse debt. All government financing, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac.

SHANKEN: Is this conventional apartments or government-subsidized public housing?

RODRIGUEZ: No public housing. Garden style. Average rent, call it \$950. I saw my mother—we never had enough money to own anything. And I remember my mother having two jobs. And [the rent], feels like it comes every three days. I remember as a young kid thinking if I can ever trade places with the landlord, that's what I'm going to do. And the first opportunity I had to be the landlord I bought my small duplex.

SHANKEN: So, do you have other significant businesses?

RODRIGUEZ: For a long time it was three silos. It was real estate, fully integrated from top to bottom and management and all of that, to autos, and then health and fitness, meaning gyms. I had a great Mercedes-Benz store down in Houston, had a great business for more than 10 years, and then I exited that business in 2014. We just bought NRG eSports a few years ago. I sit on that board. [Note: Rodriguez and Shaquille O'Neil, among others, purchased a stake in NRG, a California company that invests in top-level video gamers.] The market is blowing up.

SHANKEN: How do you enter new businesses?

RODRIGUEZ: We want to always have someone who understands the business, usually 20 to 25 years of experience [as a partner]. I found a great guy, and a friend

now, Mark Mastrov, who started 24 hour Fitness from basically his garage and he grew this to over 500 gyms. He sold to Ted Forstmann for \$1.8 billion. He and I connected, and we started buying and creating gyms in Mexico, under Alex Rodriguez Energy. Then I bought the UFC rights in Florida, and recently bought a company called True Fusion. And we've created about \$100 million in enterprise value.

SHANKEN: How do you keep track of all these things?

RODRIGUEZ: I have a great team. Like sports, you have to have a great team.

SHANKEN: So I'm going to mention three guys, and you have to tell me what they have in common: Michael Jordan, Wayne Gretzky and Derek Jeter.

RODRIGUEZ: Well they all have multiple championships...

SHANKEN: Tell me when you want a clue.

RODRIGUEZ: Oh—they all own a team. Of course. [laughs]

SHANKEN: Do you have a thought, an interest, a dream, to one day have your own team?

RODRIGUEZ: I did for a long time Marvin, and what I realized was that for me, right now—and I get calls all the time to be a strategic owner—for me it's not the right time for several reasons. I think the time to buy a team was four or five years ago, if not before. I think these numbers have gotten pretty high. Hard to make a return on your investment for the GP [general partner] and the LP [limited partner]. And these franchises don't come available very often. I was taught by one of my mentors not to go wide and shallow, but to go narrow and deep. And to go really deep into the things you like best. I didn't have enough time, focus or energy to be running a team full time. And of course, if I bought a team I would be running it full time.

SHANKEN: Tell me about your charitable interests. What are you proudest of? What are you most active with?

RODRIGUEZ: Boys & Girls Club in many ways saved my life. My mother was busy working, my father had left for New York. [I went to] Boys & Girls Clubs every day,

Distilled in the Dominican Republic
from the fermented juice of fresh
cut, estate grown sugar cane.

A harmonious blend of the finest
quality rums patiently aged up to 10
years in ex-bourbon casks.





The Reincarnation of an Iconic Smoke



/AJFCIGARS



AJFCIGARS - AJFERNANDEZ



WWW.AJFCIGARS.COM

from three sometimes to midnight. I was safe, my self-esteem got better, I did homework, I played baseball, it was heaven. I want to give that same opportunity to the next generation.

SHANKEN: At the University of Miami, there's a baseball stadium that has your name on it. What caused you to do that?

RODRIGUEZ: Well, I'm not that nice. When I was a young man I grew up loving Ron Frazier, who was the legendary [baseball] coach there. Of course, I didn't have money to go into games. They had these really old ushers. They were pretty slow and they couldn't see very well. My friends, we had a strategy—we would distract one, while the others would jump over the fence in the right-field corner. And once we were in by four o'clock we were there until midnight, just watching Hurricanes baseball. And I did this for a long time, so what I figured was—

SHANKEN: You owe them! [laughs]

RODRIGUEZ: I had a lot of debt that I had to pay, so I said the first time I get a chance to give a nice donation, I wanted to give what I give to name the field Alex Rodriguez field.

SHANKEN: Tell me about the women in your life.

RODRIGUEZ: Well, it starts with my mother. I'm big into women empowerment, women in equality. And that starts with watching my mother for many years. So much respect and admiration. I wish she had more power growing up. Obviously I have two daughters, and I want them to always aim for No. 1, aim for CEO, aim for president, don't concede that job or that place, that power. And I have a sister. So I've always wanted women to be treated just like men. At my company they have a seat at the table, my two highest-paid employees are women, and I love it.

SHANKEN: Are there any other women in your life these days? I've seen some pictures—it's not a secret.

RODRIGUEZ: Jennifer [Lopez], when you talk about power, and you talk about beautiful, both inside and outside. The way she mothers her twins, the way she's with my daughters. There's just so much



admiration. And what I love about Jennifer is how genuine, how real, and how much she does for others, and how much she inspires others, men and women.

SHANKEN: You don't have to answer, but is there a plan? Is there a permanency?

RODRIGUEZ: Well, we have a plan to fly to Miami this afternoon, to see our daughters. [laughs]

SHANKEN: That's a plan!

RODRIGUEZ: But we're having a great time. Both of us are New York kids—she was born in the Bronx, I was born in Washington Heights—we're both Latinos, she's Puerto Rican, I'm Dominican. We've both been through a lot over the years, good and bad. And we're both in our 40s

now and feel like we have an opportunity to give back. And we enjoy ourselves and we're having a good time.

SHANKEN: Final question. How would you like to be remembered?

RODRIGUEZ: [long pause] I think, someone that has been through a lot. Has accomplished a lot. Has made great mistakes, but he refused to be defined by those mistakes. ❖

A-ROD: THE VIDEOS

Go to video.cigaraficionado.com to view videos of this exclusive interview between Marvin R. Shanken and Alex Rodriguez.





Quest For The Cup

Golf's best will battle for the Ryder Cup in September, reigniting a match-play contest that has burned blazing hot for 30 years

BY JEFF WILLIAMS

NEARLY A CENTURY AGO SAMUEL RYDER, an English businessman smitten with the game of golf, was looking to put his name on something beyond the penny packets of seeds he sold through the mail. Ryder had the very 21st Century idea that he could market his Heath & Heather seed company by using golf as a poster board. He began by sponsoring some small competitions among professionals in the United Kingdom. Then the idea of a competition between British and American professionals fell within his purview.

I'll donate the trophy, Ryder said. I'll pick up some expenses, Ryder said.

My, has the game of golf reaped the bumper crop of what Ryder had sown.

The Ryder Cup arrives on the outskirts of Paris at the end of September as a massive competition of fire and brimstone between American pros and those from Europe, competition that has elevated the taciturn game to its emotional acme. From the first Ryder Cup in 1927, backed by a seed business, has sprouted a financial gold mine worth tens of millions of dollars, or euros, or pounds sterling—whatever the currency of choice. And while Ryder, as an Englishman, might be appalled that the competition is being held on French soil for the first time, he no doubt would be elated that his name is now immortalized, and the game he so loved has benefited from his initial generosity (and, of course, his self interest).



GARY KELLNER/PGA OF AMERICA/GETTY IMAGES



TOP: BRIAN SPURLOCK/ICON SPORTSWIRE/GETTY IMAGES; BOTTOM: RAMSEY CADDY/SPORTSFILE/GETTY IMAGES

REED & MCILROY

The Ryder Cup has unusually spirited displays. This year expect to see a rematch between 2016 competitors Patrick “Captain America” Reed and Rory McIlroy.



1987 MUIRFIELD VILLAGE

Seve Ballesteros breaks out the bubbly to celebrate Europe's first Ryder Cup victory on American soil, at Muirfield Village in 1987.

The Albatros Course at Le Golf National in the southwest suburbs of Paris is the host of this year's Ryder Cup, the 42nd edition of the ultimate match-play competition between the United States and Europe. The Americans are the defending champions, having won decisively at Hazeltine in 2016 and holding an overall 27 to 14 lead since the biennial competition began. But since the teams from Great Britain and Ireland were expanded to include players from continental Europe in 1979, the Europeans have an 11-8 advantage.

It was Jack Nicklaus in 1977 who pushed the idea of including European players on the Great Britain side. He was fearful that the event was fading into oblivion because the Americans had been so dominant. What a wise move it was. It would bring Bernhard Langer of Germany and José María Olazábal of Spain into the mix. But crucially, it brought the man who would come to symbolize the passion of the Ryder Cup, Spain's Seve Ballesteros.

Ballesteros ignited the Ryder Cup in the 1980s in a way that Arnold Palmer ignited the game of golf in the 1960s. Like Palmer, Ballesteros was perfect for the television age, his talent piercing through TV screens and bringing with it the highly charged emotional component of his personality. The Ryder Cup couldn't have had a better poster boy.

The spirit of Ballesteros carries on all the way to the Champs-Élysées this September. The Americans are captained by Jim Furyk, the Europeans by Thomas Bjørn. Patrick Reed, the reigning Masters Champion, has become the American firebrand. Sergio García has been the European counterpart. Golf fans around the world are eager to watch golf's ultimate duel. But this monumental tussle among the world's best players wouldn't have been possible without the groundwork of five Ryder Cups that fueled the imagination and showcased match play golf at its very finest.

1983 PGA National

During the 1977 Ryder Cup at Royal Lytham in England, officials of the PGA of America and PGA of Great Britain tossed about an idea to make the Ryder Cup more competitive. The U.S. victory at Lytham gave the Americans 10 straight Cups, and it had become a yawner. Jack Nicklaus, a member of the team, suggested to British PGA head Lord Darby that players from continental Europe be included in the future. It was a seminal moment.

In 1979, the competition was now the United States versus Europe. The result was the same, a lopsided victory by the Americans, but for the first time a young, dashing, tremendously talented Spaniard was part of the team—Seve Ballesteros. At 22, Ballesteros was coming off his first major victory that summer, the British Open, and although he won only one point in four matches at the '79 Cup, a spark was lit within his golfing soul.

Ballesteros was at full fire in the 1983 matches at PGA National. Only 26 at the time, he was paired by captain Tony Jacklin with 20-year-old Briton Paul Way in the four team matches, and they won two and a half points out of the possible four. Ballesteros fought to gain a half with Fuzzy Zoeller in Sunday's leadoff singles match, hitting an outstanding 3-wood out of a fairway bunker on the 18th hole. The Americans barely won, 14 1/2 to 13 1/2, their 13th straight victory.

But as Way would recount later, Jacklin had given Ballesteros the task, eagerly embraced, to be Way's mentor, a job Ballesteros took upon himself for the remainder of his remarkable Ryder Cup career. "You have to be like a father to Paul, you have to guide him," Way recalled Jacklin telling Ballesteros.

"We were all pretty down as we had come so close to inflicting on America their first defeat in 26 years," said Way. "But Seve was an inspiration, telling us 'This isn't a defeat, this is a win.'" The stage for future victory had been set, and the future of the Ryder Cup would never be the same.

1987 Muirfield Village

Ten years after Nicklaus suggested to include European players, the Ryder Cup was played at his Muirfield Village Club in suburban Columbus, Ohio. It was 60 years after the first Ryder Cup at the Worcester Country Club in Massachusetts, and during that entire time the American team had never lost on its home soil.

But the 1987 Europeans were a powerhouse. Nick Faldo, Sandy Lyle, Bernhard Langer and Ballesteros were all major winners. Europe had six players who would accumulate 18 majors.

Olazábal was a Ryder Cup rookie that year. Ballesteros wanted

WOODS



KOEPKA



JOHNSON



The 2018 Cup: Will Tiger Play?

It's been six years since Tiger Woods played on an American Ryder Cup team, the 2012 squad that was overtaken by Europe on the final day at Medinah for a shocking victory. Since then he's been a hurting Tiger, his back so bad that a year ago he wasn't even sure he would ever play again. But spinal fusion surgery worked a minor miracle, and Tiger's determination to still be a major player on the world scene has worked an even greater one. Five years after his last win and 10 years since his last victory in a major, Tiger is not only competitive on the Tour again, but his recent play has made him the hottest talk as a potential Ryder Cup captain's pick. U.S. captain Jim Furyk will make his four selections in early September, and odds are that Woods will be one of the dozen U.S. team members playing against the Europeans at Le Golf National outside of Paris on September 28–30.

Woods finished sixth at the British Open in July, holding the lead briefly on the back nine on Sunday, and in August threatened to win the PGA Championship with a final round of 66. He finished second, only two shots behind champion Brooks

Koepka, who won his second major of the year.

Furyk was coy about whether he would name Woods to the team. "I'm not sure the numbers are always that important when I look down the list," Furyk said in August. "What is important is how well Tiger has played. Sixth place at The Open Championship, a second place at the PGA. His game is trending... For me, the numbers are nice, good to look at, but not always the most important. We want the players who are going to help us be successful."

On August 13, the first eight members of the American squad were announced, based on points accumulated over the season. Players get one point for every \$1,000 earned on a regular PGA Tour event, two points for every \$1,000 earned as a winner of a major, and 1.5 points per \$1,000 earned for those making the cut (but not winning) one of the majors.

The American lineup so far is pretty impressive: Koepka, a three-time major winner and the reigning U.S. Open and PGA Championship champion; Dustin Johnson, the No. 1 golfer in the world; Justin Thomas, who won the 2017 PGA title; Masters champion Patrick Reed, known in Ryder Cup circles as Captain America; two-time Masters winner Bubba Watson; Jordan Spieth, who has won every major save for a PGA Championship; Rickie Fowler, who has a top three performance in every major but has yet to win one; and Webb Simpson, the 2012 U.S. Open winner.

Bryson DeChambeau just missed making the team, scoring ninth in points, and could be one of the captain's picks. Phil Mickelson, Matt Kuchar, Kevin Kisner and Xander Schauffele are figuring into the mix. Mickelson has played on all 11 Ryder Cup teams since 1995.

Woods ended up finishing a remarkable 11th in points with his sizzling performance at the PGA Championship. "I'm just very pleased at

what I've done so far and now to be a part of the Ryder Cup conversation, going from where I've come to now in the last year, it's been pretty cool," said Woods right after the PGA.

Woods' record in the seven of his Ryder Cups is solid, though not stellar. He's won four matches, lost one and halved two in singles play. In foursomes and fourball play he is 9-16-1.

In 2016, the U.S. scored a resounding victory at Hazeltine where the sidelined Woods was a vice captain. The Americans haven't defended a title against the Europeans since 1993.

As this issue went to press in late August, the European team was more of a mystery—that roster will not be complete until September, and its selection process is a bit different from that of the Americans. Four players come off the European tour points list and four more off a world points list, which accounts for European members playing in other events around the globe. It seemed certain that Francesco Molinari (who won the British Open), four-time Major winner Rory McIlroy, Justin Rose, Tommy Fleetwood, Tyrrell Hatton, Jon Rahm and Alex Norén would be in Paris. Ian Poulter, the heart of several European teams but who had to sit out injured in 2016, seems likely to make it on points. If he does not, he's certain to be one of captain Thomas Bjørn's four selections.

The Europeans might have a slight home course advantage on the Albatros Course at Le Golf National, the annual host of the French Open. All it needs is 100 palm trees to make it akin to a Florida-style course with plenty of water hazards, especially coming down the stretch.

Picking Woods is Furyk's hot-button selection. And he knows it. "I realize Tiger is a story," he says. "I realize he's playing very well, and I'm excited to see that."

So too, are American and European golf fans. And so, too, is Tiger himself. —JW

to play with him and mentor him, and captain Tony Jacklin followed his wishes. The two Spaniards would become the most potent pairing in Ryder Cup history.

Ballesteros and Olazábal edged Payne Stewart and Larry Nelson in the opening foursomes match. They followed with a victory in the afternoon fourball over Curtis Strange and Tom Kite. On Saturday they won their third straight match, a foursomes triumph over Ben Crenshaw and Stewart. In the afternoon they lost to Hal Sutton and Larry Mize, but their three points over two days (along with Faldo and Ian Woosnam's 3 1/2 points) had propelled the Europeans to a 10 1/2-5 1/2 lead heading into the Sunday singles.

The Americans launched a blistering counterattack on Sunday, closing the gap to 12-11. But in the 10th match of the session (out of 12) Ballesteros sank a putt on the 17th hole to defeat Curtis Strange 2 and 1. That turned out to be the Cup winner, giving the Europeans their first victory in America by a score of 15-13.

With the biggest crowds ever to see a Ryder Cup in America, there was a definite amping up of nationalistic noise in 1987, a precursor of the fervor that was to come in subsequent Cups. In a massive departure of the assumed etiquette of the game, there was some cheering for poor shots and missed putts by the opposition. The roars for the American team were sometimes deafening, but the Europeans weren't deterred one bit.

"We all went to America quietly confident," Jacklin would say later. "The different feeling from previous matches was that we had the Ryder Cup and wanted to put the icing on the cake by winning for the first time in America."

Golf was turning into a team sport.

1991 Kiawah Island

This was the Cup that changed everything. This was the War by the Shore.

The battle at Pete and Alice Dye's then-brand-new Ocean Course on Kiawah Island, South Carolina, in September of 1991 forever elevated the Ryder Cup and forever stirred its emotional cauldron. There was high drama, controversy, conflict and unprecedented spectator fervor (not to mention a fair amount of crudeness from the American fans). There was also some pretty compelling golf, from great shots to choke jobs. And for the first time, all three days of the event were televised. This is where the Ryder Cup moved into the upper echelon of sports.

The Americans had been dominant through the first six decades of the Ryder Cup, but the Europeans had won three straight and rode their Concorde across the Atlantic like a chariot in Ben Hur. And the simmering conflict between Ballesteros and Paul Azinger raised its ugly head. In 1989, Ballesteros wanted to replace a scuffed ball midmatch, but Azinger disagreed. During the opening foursomes match at Kiawah on Friday, Ballesteros questioned whether Azinger and partner Chip Beck had correctly changed balls on the seventh hole. Before the event began, Ballesteros referred to the American team as "11 nice guys plus Azinger."

There was a definite amping up of nationalistic noise in 1987, a precursor of the fervor that was to come in subsequent Cups.

"The king of gamesmanship doesn't like me?" responded Azinger. "Good. A feather in my cap."

Ballesteros and Olazábal were the only Europeans to win in the morning foursomes. The Americans took a 3-1 lead, spearheaded by the pair of veteran Ray Floyd and emerging star Fred Couples. The Europeans bounced back in the afternoon fourball to pull within a point with Ballesteros and Olazábal winning again.

The Americans stretched the lead to three points Saturday morn-

ing, then in the afternoon, the Europeans won 3 1/2 points, leaving it all square going into the Sunday singles. (American Steve Pate had been injured in an auto accident, so only 11 matches were played.) Europe galloped to the front with a match win by Nick Faldo over Floyd. That was followed by David Feherty—yes, that David Feherty—winning against Stewart. Then came what seemed a crushing half

in the match between Mark Calcavecchia and Colin Montgomery. Calcavecchia had been up four holes, then gave them all away down the stretch, including a snap slice into the pond on 17 followed by missing a two-foot putt that allowed Monty to win the hole with a double bogey. Calcavecchia retreated to the dunes after the match ended, to cry.



1991 KIAWAH ISLAND

The U.S. team celebrating victory at "The War by the Shore" on Kiawah Island in 1991. Then-vice president Dan Quayle is in the front row.

The Americans clawed their way back into it and it came down to the final match, Hale Irwin against Langer. Irwin needed a half to seal the victory. The tension wasn't just palpable, it was downright tortuous. Both players stumbled their way home. On the 18th both missed the green, then Irwin choked a 70-foot pitch shot halfway to the hole. Langer rolled his shot to six feet. Irwin two-putted for bogey, leaving Langer with a putt to win the hole and the Ryder Cup. You could just about see the pressure ridges in the air. Langer missed and the Cup went back to the Americans.

Hennessy

PARADIS IMPÉRIAL



10/10 000

FROM ANY GIVEN HARVEST, THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF EAUX-DE-VIE
WITH THE POTENTIAL TO ONE DAY JOIN THIS BLEND ARE A RARE FEW:
ONLY 10 OUT OF 10 000. SELECTION IS NOT ONLY A SCIENCE. IT IS AN ART.

MADE OF PRECISION

“I couldn’t breathe, I couldn’t swallow,” said Irwin afterward. “The sphincter factor was high.”

The Americans carried captain Dave Stockton over the dunes and threw him into the Atlantic Ocean. Stockton knew that something had happened way beyond a golf match victory.

“It all came together,” said Stockton. “It changed the dynamics of the Ryder Cup, the competition of it and what people thought of it.”

1999 Brookline

The Americans followed up their 1991 victory with another at The Belfry in 1993. But then the Europeans triumphed at Oak Hill in 1995 and eked out another win at Valderrama in Spain in 1997 with Ballesteros as their captain. The 1999 American team assembled at the Country Club at Brookline outside of Boston was formidable and seemed the clear favorites. There was the fully fledged Tiger Woods, superstars David Duval and Phil Mickelson, plus stalwarts like Stewart, Tom Lehman, Davis Love III and Justin Leonard. But there was also a sense of disarray—the professionals were never paid to play the Ryder Cup, but its soaring revenues got some American players wondering why they weren’t getting something out of it. With some of his team being branded as greedy, American captain Ben Crenshaw admonished several of his top players about their stance on Ryder Cup revenue. (The issue was ultimately settled with large donations to player charities.)

Whether the controversy had any bearing on the American play is open to debate, but after two days of foursome and four-ball play they trailed the Europeans 10-6 going into the Sunday singles. No team had ever overcome such a deficit to win the Cup.

Crenshaw addressed the media upon completion of play Saturday, first taking the time for a cigarette to calm himself down. After answering a few questions, he started pointing his finger. “I’m going to leave you all with one thought,” he said. “I’m a big believer in fate. I have a good feeling about this. That’s all I am going to tell you.”

Crenshaw gave a long, cigarette-filled pep talk in the team room that night, along with plenty of speeches by the players, and a speech by a guest, then-Texas governor George W. Bush.

The Americans won the first six matches on Sunday and never surrendered. It came down to Leonard’s match against Olazábal where the American needed a half to win the Cup. Leonard drained a 45-footer, which ignited a tumult on the 17th green as American players, wives, television crews and a few spectators raced to congratulate Leonard while running across the line of Olazábal’s putt, one he would eventually miss.

European assistant captain Sam Torrance called the celebrations “the most disgusting thing I’ve seen in my life.” Lehman, who had been one of the exuberant celebrators, admitted the actions had been “over-the-top.”

The Cup was notable for one other reason. The shirts the Americans wore in the final, which Crenshaw had a lot to do with designing, were a maroon number with historical golf pictures strewn about. They were likely the most memorable—and reviled—golf shirts in the history of the game.



2012 MEDINAH

In 2012, Europe’s Ian Poulter was unstoppable, winning all four matches in which he played. He brought his team back from a 10-6 deficit.

2012 Medinah

Now it was Europe who would face the same 10-6 deficit that the Americans had overcome in 1999 going into the Sunday singles matches at Medinah Country Club outside of Chicago. Europe held the Cup, and needed 8 points to keep it. The Americans needed 4 1/2 points to take it back. This would become Ian Poulter’s Ryder Cup, and his play in the Saturday afternoon fourballs started to turn the tide for Europe even though it ended the day down by four points. As Feherty said after Poulter had reeled off five straight birdies: “It’s tied 10-6.”

That night Olazábal, the European captain, invoked the spirit of the late Ballesteros, who had died a year earlier of a brain tumor. The Europeans again wrapped themselves in team spirit. Olazábal said they needed to win the first five matches, and they did just that.

They did it despite a timing error by McIlroy, who thought his match against Keegan Bradley, who had become an American firebrand, was at 12:25 when it was actually at 11:25. It took a police escort to get him to the course on time. That he arrived with 11 minutes to spare and had a chocolate bar for lunch didn’t seem to matter. He put on a brilliant display and defeated Bradley in the third match out, which followed a victory by Poulter in the second match over Webb Simpson.

Rose defeated Mickelson in the fourth match, and Mickelson applauded Rose’s 40-foot birdie putt on the 17th hole. After Jim Furyk made two late bogeys to lose his match, it would come down to the German Martin Kaymer against the usually dependable Steve Stricker. But when Stricker three-putted the 18th, that left Kaymer with a five-footer to win the match and retain the Cup. He poured it in and Europe celebrated with a 14 1/2-13 1/2 victory.

Poulter won all four matches he played, his putter a magic wand, his personality an inspiration. Afterward, he wouldn’t take credit though he had certainly earned it. “It was not about me, or this putt or that putt, or this birdie or that bogey,” he said. “It was about collective self-belief, about not accepting it was done. Absolutely nothing is over until it is over.” ♦

Jeff Williams is a CIGAR AFICIONADO contributing editor.

A photograph of Roger Federer, a professional tennis player, standing behind a grey counter. He is wearing a blue crewneck sweater over a blue and white checkered collared shirt. He is holding a glass of latte with a thick layer of white foam. His left hand is resting on the counter. In the background, there is a large window with light-colored curtains.

jura®

Coffee pleasure –
freshly ground,
not capsuled.

A sleek, modern Jura S8 automatic coffee machine with a silver and black finish. It features a large 4.3-inch color touchscreen display on the front, showing various coffee options. Below the screen are two coffee spouts and a milk frother. Two glasses of coffee are placed on the drip tray in front of the machine.

R.F.

Roger Federer
Greatest tennis champion
of all time

The stylish S8 from JURA captivates even the most discerning coffee connoisseurs, including Roger Federer. It combines the best of the compact class with premium features, such as Pulse Extraction Process (P.E.P.®) for optimal extraction time. Fine foam technology guarantees professional barista quality, whether it's for ristretto, latte macchiato or flat white. This model offers an unparalleled range of 15 specialties, including, for the first time, caffè latte. The 4.3" color touchscreen display makes for intuitive operation. JURA – If you love coffee.

JURA offers a full range of Swiss designed and Swiss engineered automatic coffee machines from \$799 to \$5,499.

jura.com

COLLECT &
SMOKE 30+ CIGARS

CIGAR AFICIONADO'S

BIG SMOKE

LAS VEGAS

WEEKEND

THE MIRAGE • NOVEMBER 9 – NOVEMBER 11, 2018



ULTIMATE WEEKEND FOR CIGAR LOVERS

The three-day event includes two Big Smoke evenings and exciting daytime seminars with *Cigar Aficionado* editors and renowned cigar makers. It's a dream weekend that also includes dinner buffets, and a delicious cigar lovers' breakfast and lunch. Go to LasVegasBigSmoke.com for the jam-packed agenda and the list of premium cigars!

BIG SMOKE EVENINGS

Two unforgettable nights of exceptional premium cigars, spirits and food. Collect 30+ cigars while you enjoy talking to cigarmakers, mingling with other cigar aficionados, and smoking with friends. Participating cigars will be announced on lasvegasbigsmoke.com!

Questions? email events@mshanken.com



TICKETS ON SALE AT LASVEGASBIGSMOKE.COM

*Limited Quantities of Early-Bird Tickets Available.

Regular Prices: All-Access - \$925, Weekend Package - \$725, Big Smoke Evening VIP - \$425, Big Smoke Evening General Admission - \$375

BIG SMOKE LAS VEGAS DAYTIME CIGAR SEMINARS

NOVEMBER 10 – 11, 2018

TOP 3 CIGARS OF 2017

- **Carlos Fuente Jr.** presents the Arturo Fuente Eye of the Shark
- **Jorge Padron** presents the Padrón Serie 1926 No. 2
- **Jose Oliva** presents the Oliva Serie V Belicoso

THE NEW KING: NICARAGUA

A discussion about Nicaragua's past, present and future with the country's top producers.

- Rocky Patel of Rocky Patel Cigars
- Nestor Andrés Plasencia of Plasencia Cigars
- Alejandro Martinez Cuenca of Joya de Nicaragua.

CULT CIGARS

A panel with cigarmakers who make some of the hottest cigars on the market.

- **Dion Giolito** - illusione
- **Pete Johnson** - Tatuaje
- **Kyle Gellis** -Warped Cigars

YES,
YOU CAN
SMOKE.

THE STATE OF CUBAN CIGARS

David Savona and Gordon Mott of *Cigar Aficionado* are joined by Fernando Domínguez, Premium Cigar Director of Imperial Brands to discuss Cuba's newest cigars, supply and demand, crop reports and much more.

LUNCHEON PRESENTED BY MICALLEF CIGAR

Enjoy a delicious seated lunch hosted by **Micallef Cigar**. There will be cigars for everyone!

CIGAR LOVERS' BREAKFAST

Nicole Brisson, Executive Chef of Eataly Las Vegas, cooks up a delicious breakfast to pair with some of **Oliva Cigar's** best smokes. **Dewar's** breakfast cocktail included!

ROLL YOUR OWN CIGAR

Learn to roll a cigar like a pro with Michael Giannini, General Manager and Creative Director of **Ventura Cigars**.

CIGAR & SPIRITS

Enjoy a selection of exceptional cigars from **Altadis** paired with a premium spirit.

TICKETS

ALL ACCESS PACKAGE - \$875

Daytime Sit-Down Seminars
2 Big Smoke Evenings (VIP)

WEEKEND PACKAGE - \$675

Daytime Sit-Down Seminars
1 Big Smoke Evening (VIP)

BIG SMOKE EVENINGS

VIP Admission - **\$375/night**
General Admission - **\$325/night**

LEARN MORE AND BUY TICKETS VISIT LASVEGASBIGSMOKE.COM





The Eagles, led by backup quarterback Nick Foles, stunned the world by beating the New England Patriots in the Super Bowl. Will Philadelphia fly high again?

PATRICK SMITH/GETTY IMAGES

NFL PREVIEW



Can the Eagles repeat? Will the Patriots continue their record of excellence?
And could the Browns and Giants continue to fail? We pick the winners and losers,
all the way to the Big Game in February ***BY DANNY SHERIDAN***



The Miami Dolphins defense tries to stop the rushing attack of Dion Lewis of the New England Patriots during a game last year at Hard Rock Stadium.

AFC EAST »»»

WINNER: New England Patriots

Despite just missing their sixth Lombardi Trophy, the Patriots remain the NFL's model franchise. Owned by the Kraft family and led by QB Tom Brady (who recently turned 41) they went 13-3, setting an NFL record of eight straight seasons with 12 or more wins. Brady led the league with 4,577 passing yards and threw 32 TDs. Rob Gronkowski, who will be an action figure in the movies one day, was his main target with 69 catches (1,084 yards), most of any TE. The Pats lost LT Nate Solder to the Giants, and receivers Danny Amendola (now in Miami) and Brandin Cooks (who was traded to the Rams). But genius grouch Bill Belichick hasn't gone anywhere and offensive coordinator Josh McDaniels changed his mind about the Colts head coaching job and stayed. Brady won't have No. 1 draft Isaiah Wynn (Achilles) protecting him now that Solder is a Giant, and Julian Edelman will be a major plus once his four-game suspension ends. Brady wants to play for two more seasons. Will Gisele let him? And can he stand being underappreciated by the genius grouch?

Miami Dolphins The 6-10 Dolphins went further south than South Beach. QB Jay Cutler was lured out of retirement with a \$10 million contract but it didn't work. Miami was inept on defense, too, with a 17th-ranked squad. First-round pick defensive back Minkah Fitzpatrick better help, because owner Stephen Ross would have preferred executive VP Mike Tannenbaum to trade down for more picks. Miami traded star receiver Jarvis Landry (112 catches, 987 yards) to the Browns with the hope that ex-Pat Danny

Amendola can replace him, and good luck replacing a Boy Named Suh. Unless fragile quarterback Ryan Tannehill remains healthy, Miami's only happy hours will be at Joe's Stone Crab.

Buffalo Bills First-year coach Sean McDermott got the 9-7 Bills into the playoffs for the first time since 2000 as he maximized the talent of a mediocre roster. Hiring former Alabama OC Brian Daboll will pay dividends. Buffalo has a couple of playmakers to build around in RB LeSean McCoy, who delivered 1,138 yards rushing and another 448 with 59 receptions, and TE Charles Clay. No. 1 draft pick Josh Allen, a big-armed project, will be the starting QB over A.J. McCarron and Nathan Peterman the second the coaches deem him ready. With a decimated offensive line and pedestrian receiving corps, Allen's rookie season will be better spent wolfing down the wings at the Anchor Bar and Duff's.

New York Jets Gang Green (5-11) traded their No. 6 overall pick, two second-round 2018 draft choices and one next year to move up and make Sam Darnold their franchise QB. "I want him to start NOW!" coach Todd Bowles jokingly bellowed. "I think people are going to look back 20 years from now and say that this is the moment that the Jets shifted into a new gear and became a great team," said owner Christopher Johnson. Someone tell him that the Jets are nearing the 50-year anniversary of their only Super Bowl victory. Until then, 39-year-old Josh McCown returns for another year (with Teddy Bridgewater signed as insurance) and maybe more if he's healthy again. The Jets have gone seven straight seasons without a playoff berth and Bowles is 20-28. He might want to treat the owners to the branzino arrosto at Sandro's.

AFC NORTH >>>

WINNER: Pittsburgh Steelers

The Steelers (13-3) have remained consistent by winning 45 games in the past four seasons. The main reason has been the Killer Bees: Ben Roethlisberger (4,251 yards, 28 TDs); Antonio Brown (101 catches, 1,533 yards) and Le'Veon Bell, who rushed for 1,291 yards and caught 655 more. But the defense was certainly no Steel Curtain after playmaking LB Ryan Shazier suffered a horrific spine injury. Pitt drafted WR James Washington to replace troubled Martavis Bryant, and second-year WR JuJu Smith-Schuster (58 catches, 917 yards) is a star in the making. Journeyman free agent Jon Bostic will try to replace Shazier on a defense that needs to take the pressure off Roethlisberger, who told the club he wants to play three more years. Not exactly what third-round draft choice Mason Rudolph wants to hear.

Baltimore Ravens Coach John Harbaugh is feeling the heat after missing the playoffs for the last three years. Joe Flacco hasn't been an elite QB since Harbaugh beat his brother (and Colin Kaepernick, remember him?) to win the 2013 Super Bowl. Flacco's 18 TDs and 13 INTs are a concern, which is why departing GM Ozzie Newsome jumped to the bottom of the first round to draft former Louisville Heisman Trophy QB Lamar Jackson, who may be a righthanded Michael Vick. Signing free agent WRs Michael Crabtree and speedster John Brown were good moves. First-round draft pick TE Hayden Hurst should be a godsend for Flacco. Pass rusher Terrell Suggs (11 sacks) will be 36 in October.

Cincinnati Bengals Three years ago, the Bengals were considered Super Bowl contenders, but regressed into a losing culture. Cincy has never won a playoff game under Coach Marvin Lewis, yet he has survived an 0-7 playoff record. It must be frustrating for the team's best players, QB Andy Dalton (3,320 yds, 25 TDs); WR A.J. Green (75 receptions, 1,078 yards) and Pro Bowl DT Geno Atkins (9 sacks). Second-year RB Joe Mixon will be the focal point of an offense that ranked last in 2017.

Cleveland Browns There's a new sheriff in town for the sad sack Browns, who were drowning by the lake with one win in two seasons. "The guys before me didn't get real players," said GM John Dorsey. Taking undersized QB Baker Mayfield with the No. 1 overall pick earned him criticism. Even more surprising was drafting CB Denzel Ward with the fourth pick instead of DE Bradley Chubb to bookend Myles Garrett. Dorsey did earn praise for grabbing ex-Miami WR Jarvis Landry (112 catches) and ex-49ers RB Carlos Hyde (938 yards). Mayfield, who won the Heisman, eventually will be in a spirited battle with ex-Bills QB Tyrod Taylor for the starter job. Can he end the QB Curse of Cleveland? Since 1998, there have been 28 busts—almost as many as a slow night at the Playboy Mansion for the late Hugh Hefner. President Trump will kneel for the National Anthem before the Browns win a Super Bowl.

AFC SOUTH >>>

WINNER: Jacksonville Jaguars

The Jags exploded for their first winning season since 2007, going 10-6 under first-year Coach Doug Marrone and first-year VP of football operations Tom Coughlin. They got the Jaguars to growl, and almost knocked off the Patriots in the AFC Championship game. Much-maligned QB Blake Bortles had a breakout year (3,687 yards), and was helped immensely by rookie RB Leonard Fournette's 1,040 yards. A fast defense, led by Calais Campbell (14.5 sacks) and loudmouth shutdown corner Jalen Ramsey, crowned the team's nickname "Sacksonville" and was a big reason why they swept their division. The Jags will be predators once more in their new uniforms.

Houston Texans After 54 games with 18 QBs, Coach Bill O'Brien finally found his franchise quarterback in rookie sensation Deshaun Watson, who lit the NFL on fire before going down with a torn ACL after seven games. All-Pro WR DeAndre Hopkins (96 receptions, 1,378 yards, 13 TDs) was the go-to guy. The Texans tightened a weak secondary with ex-Cardinal Safety Tyrann (Honey Badger) Mathieu, and expect a big comeback from humanitarian DE J.J. Watt after missing 24 games the last two years following leg surgery.

Tennessee Titans The Titans went 9-7 and won a playoff game for the first time since 2007, yet fired Coach Mike Mularkey. It's up to new coach Mike Vrabel to resuscitate Marcus Mariota, who had his worst season in three years with only 13 TDs and 15 INTs. The offense was anemic. Only TE Delanie Walker (807 yards), WR Rishard Matthews (795 yards) and RB Derrick Henry (744 yards) were noteworthy. WR Corey Davis, the 2017 first-rounder, needs to emerge. Ex-Patriot RB Dion Lewis adds versatility to the offense, while ex-Pats CB Malcolm Butler brings stability to the secondary.

"President Trump will kneel for the National Anthem before the Browns win a Super Bowl."

Indianapolis Colts Years of bad drafts make Indy (4-12) a huge reclamation project. They're like a hamster going around and around on a wheel. No QB was sacked more than Jacoby Brissett (52), which leaves Andrew Luck, returning from a yearlong shoulder injury, wondering about a weak offensive line. It's a wonder 35-year-old RB Frank Gore, who left as a free agent, ran for 961 yards. WR T.Y. Hilton (966 yards), and TE Jack Doyle (690 yards) were the rest of the offense. At least Luck should be heartened by first-round pick Quenton Nelson, a nasty guard from Notre Dame. Indy lost a good coach in Chuck Pagano, who was replaced by former Eagles offensive coordinator Frank Reich. Not even the atomic cocktail sauce at St. Elmo's can wake up this team.

MICALLEF CIGARS



GRANDE BOLD

Building a whole new
cigar experience.



GRANDE BOLD

MATA FINA

NICARAGUA

LIGERO

MADURO

SUMATRA

5 blends.
22 smoking options.

MicallefCigars.com | 817.598.5231 | @MicallefCigars



AFC WEST

WINNER: Oakland Raiders

After 10 years in the TV booth, Jon (Chucky) Gruden is returning to The Black Hole where it all began for him in 1998. The Raiders were a playoff team in 2016 but fell to 6-10 last year. An offensive guru, Gruden inherits some talent. QB Derek Carr (3,496 yards, 22 TDs) is the kingpin who played hurt most of the year. Signing ex-Packers WR Jordy Nelson to replace Michael Crabtree was a smart move that gives Carr another weapon to go along with TE Jared Cook (688 yards) and WR Amari Cooper (680 yards), while RB Marshawn Lynch (891 yards) supplies the Beast Mode. Cooper is primed for a bounceback season as long as he learns how to be a Gruden Grinder. Like his father, Mark Davis is a trendsetter—he's taking the Raiders to Las Vegas in 2019, where a prime table at the new Spago will surely be waiting for him. Al Davis was never afraid to roll the dice on anything. Somewhere up there, he's smiling.

Los Angeles Chargers The Chargers are nobody's team. San Diego is mad at them and Los Angeles didn't invite them, but the nomad Chargers were a feel-good story last year anyway. After opening 0-4, they went on a 9-3 run to finish 9-7. At age 36, QB Philip Rivers can still fling it (4,515 yards, 28 TDs) and has solid playmakers in WR Keenan Allen (1,393 yards) and dual threat RB Melvin Gordon. WR Mike Williams, the No. 1 pick in 2017, needs to emerge to help offset the season-ending loss of TE Hunter Henry. On defense, coach Anthony Lynn has a dynamic duo in DEs Joey Bosa and Melvin Ingram, who combined for 23 sacks. No. 1 draft safety Derwin James is an enforcer.

Denver Broncos The Broncos won the 2016 Super Bowl, but they were broken last season by an eight-game losing streak and a 5-11 finish. First-year head coach Vance Joseph was undermined by an underperforming defense. RB CJ Anderson (who is now with Carolina) and WR Demaryius Thomas did the best they could with sub-par play from a trio of quarterbacks. After failing to find a starting QB in his last two drafts, GM John Elway played it safe by signing ex-Viking QB Case Keenum (3,547 yards, 22 TDs). He strengthened the weakened No Fly Zone secondary by drafting N.C. State DE Bradley Chubb, to pair with All-Pro OLB Von Miller.

Kansas City Chiefs The Chiefs were an enigma. After looking like a Super Bowl contender with a 5-0 start, they stumbled yet managed to salvage a playoff berth by winning their last four games, finishing (10-6). They were surprisingly potent on offense as QB Alex Smith (4,042 yards, 26 TDs) had a career year, Rookie of the Year RB Kareem Hunt led the NFL in rushing (1,327 yards) and electric WR Tyreek Hill and athletic TE Travis Kelce were standouts. Adding WR Sammy Watkins is a positive move, but the big question is what happens to the Chiefs without Smith, who went to the Redskins? Can second-year gunslinger QB Patrick Mahomes II replace him?



Quarterback Blake Bortles of the Jacksonville Jaguars is tackled by D.J. Hayden of the Oakland Raiders. Expect both teams to lead their respective divisions this season.

NFC EAST

WINNER: Philadelphia Eagles

Unsung hero GM Howie Roseman built a Super Bowl roster that sustained itself after starting QB Carson Wentz (knee) went down in December. Backup Nick Foles turned in a 127 rating in the playoffs, caught the winning "Philly Special" reception in the fourth quarter and was named Super Bowl MVP. He'll be back for the 2018 season, and ready to step in again if Wentz isn't ready for the season opener on September 6. The Eagles went 13-3, flying high with TE Zach Ertz (824 yards), WR Alshon Jeffery (789 yards) and WR Nelson Agholor (768 yards). Coach Doug Pederson was a fearless riverboat gambler. The defense, which recorded the most pressures (336), was bolstered in the offseason with the addition of DE Michael Bennett, who came from the Seahawks. The cheesesteak lines have gotten even longer at Pat's and Geno's.

New York Giants The Giants endured their worst season in history (3-13) since 1978. That—plus six years of bad drafts—caused GM Jerry Reese's firing. Big Blue traded Jason Pierre-Paul to the Bucs and is switching to a 3-4 defense under new defensive coordinator James Bettcher. New GM David Gettleman, who hired Pat Shurmur as head coach, is convinced that 37-year-old Eli Manning can bounce back from his worst season since 2013. The Giants made the draft's biggest splash by tackling RB Saquon Barkley at No. 2. "He's been touched by the hand of God," Gettleman gushed. He also addressed a pathetic offensive line by making LT Nate Solder (\$62 million) the NFL's highest-paid offensive lineman and drafting belligerent G Will Hernandez in the second round. Shurmur will get more juice out of the offense with the return of a healthy Odell Beckham Jr. Classy owners John Mara and Steve Tisch—who might want to fuel their new coach with the lobster salad from Freds at Barneys—hope to make Beckham a Giant For Life.

Dallas Cowboys There was no “How ‘bout them Cowboys!” last year. QB Dak Prescott had a mediocre season (86.6 rating) and the team went 9-7. The six-game suspension of RB Ezekiel Elliott had a huge effect. “I want to be the best quarterback that the Cowboys ever had,” said Prescott. And Kim Jong-Un wants a Nobel Peace Prize. Receiver Dez Bryant was let go, while TE Jason Witten left for ESPN’s Monday night gig at \$4.5 million a year. No. 2 draft pick Connor Williams bolsters the elite offensive line, run by coach Paul Alexander, who claims he can rule out certain linemen by the way they dispense ketchup from a bottle. (With no Dez and no Witten, the Boys will struggle playing catchup). The Cowboys have won only one playoff game in seven years, leaving some to wonder why Coach Jason Garrett hasn’t been fired. “I just don’t understand why this guy still has a job,” said former Cowboy Terrell Owens.

The Cowboys have won only one playoff game in seven years, leaving some to wonder why Coach Jason Garrett hasn’t been fired.

Washington Redskins Not only politicians have low ratings in the nation’s capital. Redskins owner Daniel Snyder is unpopular for letting QB Kirk Cousins get away. Alex Smith, the new gunslinger in town, will find that he doesn’t have any top receivers after a 7-9 season. The best available are Jamison Crowder (789 yards) and TE Vernon Davis (648 yards). No. 2 pick Derrius Guice (knee) was lost for the season, wounding the ground attack. With a 64-95-1 record the last 10 years, Snyder is eligible for Federal Aid.

NFC NORTH >>>>

WINNER: Minnesota Vikings

The Vikes, who lost four Super Bowls in the 1970s, almost got back to another, but were crushed by the Eagles 38-7 in the NFC Championship. Case Keenum, a backup QB for two different teams, had a monster year, but he’s gone, replaced by Kirk Cousins. He’ll have an upgrade over what he had in D.C., with WRs Adam Thielen (1,276 yards) and Minnesota Miracle Man Stefon Diggs (849 yards). Mike Zimmer’s defense was No. 1 in the NFL, allowing the fewest points and yards. They get second-year RB Dalvin Cook back, who was averaging 4.8 yards per carry before a knee injury. Skol!

Green Bay Packers After dominating the North for eight years, the Packers got boxed-in and missed the playoffs. QB Aaron Rodgers played only seven games after breaking his collarbone in Week 6. His favorite WR Jordy Nelson, who notched four 1,000-yard seasons, is gone, much to Rodgers’ disgust. At least he can commiserate with racy gal pal Danica Patrick. WRs Davante Adams (885 yards) and Randall Cobb (653 yards) will be helped by red-zone target TE Jimmy Graham, who came from Seattle. But with no running game and a tepid pass rush, the Packers have a ways to go to catch the Vikes.

Detroit Lions The Lions (9-7) are hopeful Coach Matt Patricia can bring the Patriot Way to Motown. Detroit hasn’t won a division title since 1993 and no one is more frustrated than QB Matt Stafford, who had another productive outing (4,446 yards 29 TDs). He has two dependable WRs in Marvin Jones Jr. and Golden Tate III. Defensive specialist Patricia will like CB Darius Slay, but needs to fix the pass rush to help DE Ezekiel (Ziggy) Ansah and come up with a run game, which was the worst in the league. No. 1 draft center Frank Ragnow will help.

Chicago Bears John Fox was shown the door after three anemic years of double-digit losses, and Chicago brought in innovative Matt Nagy to get Da Bears off life support. His first goal is to resurrect 2017 No. 1 draft pick QB Mitch Trubisky, who needs better playmakers than the Fullback Filet Mignon at Ditka’s Restaurant. LeGarrette Blount (from the Eagles) will help, and so will WR Allen Robinson (from the Jags) and Taylor Gabriel (from Atlanta). First-round pick MLB Roquan Smith should be a Monster of the Midway for the defense.

NFC SOUTH >>>>

WINNER: New Orleans Saints

As long as Sean Payton and Drew Brees are around the Saints will be contenders. Last year, Brees threw for 4,334 yards, 23 TDs and set the NFL record for completion percentage. Imagine if he could see over the offensive line! RB Mark Ingram is suspended for the first four games, but Alvin Kamara will fill the void, and the defense gets more punch by drafting pass rusher DE Marcus Davenport. Brees can still lead a parade on Bourbon Street, and his two-year, \$50 million deal means he can splurge on the Crabmeat Yvonne at Galatoire’s. Remember, he was only a Minnesota Miracle away from the 2017 NFC Championship game in Philadelphia.

Atlanta Falcons Something’s wrong in Atlanta. The Falcons (10-6) need to rediscover their 2016 offense, when they averaged a league-best 33.8 points-per-game. New offensive coordinator Steve Sarkisian couldn’t harmonize with QB Matt Ryan as the points decreased dramatically. Julio Jones (1,444 yards, only 3 TDs) did his part, as did RB Devonta Freeman (865 yards), but that’s not enough in a tough division. No. 1 draft WR Calvin Ridley is the perfect complement to Jones.

Carolina Panthers Overnight, the Panthers (11-5) went through a transitional turmoil with new ownership and new offensive and defensive coordinators. Hedge-fund billionaire David Tepper spent a record \$2.5 billion for the team. After leading the NFL in 2015, averaging 33.8 points a game, they slumped to 22.1. Cam Newton regressed but led the team in rushing (754 yards). Wondrous offensive coordinator Norv Turner should help Newton boost his completion percentage and the defense, sparked by All-Pro LB Luke Kuechly, remains strong. The City of Charlotte owes a debt of gratitude to former owner Jerry Richardson, who brought the NFL to town in 1995.

PLEASE DRINK RESPONSIBLY. BULLEIT DISTILLING CO., LOUISVILLE, KY.

BULLEIT

BOURBON

DISTILLED AND AGED IN THE BULLEIT FAMILY TRADITION

BULLEIT® BOURBON
FRONTIER WHISKEY

KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON WHISKEY
PLEASE DRINK RESPONSIBLY

FRONTIER

WHISKY



No team scored more points last NFL season than the upstart L.A. Rams, led by QB Jared Goff. Look for Los Angeles to have another superb year.

Tampa Bay Buccaneers The Bucs went 5-11 but Coach Dirk Koetter didn't walk the plank. QB Jameis (Infamous) Winston has learned the hard way that grabbing the crotch of a female Uber driver is a violation of the league's personal conduct policy and will cost you a three-game suspension, pending appeal, to start the 2018 season. The Yucks failed to reach the postseason for the 10th consecutive season. Only WRs Mike Evans (1,001 yards) and DeSean Jackson (668 yards) showed any life. Tampa acquired quality pass rushers Jason Pierre-Paul from the Giants and Vinny Curry from the Eagles to help a defense that ranked last in sacks, third-down stops and yards allowed per game.

NFC WEST »»»

WINNER: Los Angeles Rams

The rambunctious Rams (11-5) won the West for the first time since 2003, while topping the league in points (478). In his second season, QB Jared Goff gave an indication of being a franchise QB (3,804 yards, 28 TDs, 7 INTs, 100.5 rating), while RB Todd Gurley returned to his rookie form with 1,305 yards and 13 TDs. Rookie WR Cooper Kupp emerged with 869 yards. Adding WR Brandin Cooks (1,082 yards with the Pats) was huge. DT Aaron Donald was named NFL Defensive Player of the Year, and rookie coach Sean McVay was named Coach of the Year. Ndamukong Suh, Aqib Talib and Marcus Peters make the defense stronger. L.A. will conquer the West again.

Seattle Seahawks The Legion of Boom turned into the Legion of Gloom as the once-mighty Seahawks flopped and missed the playoffs for the first time since 2011. Russell Wilson did all he could at QB (3,983 yards, 34 TDs) and even led the team in rushing (586 yards). Coach Pete Carroll was devoid of play-makers except for WR Doug Baldwin (991 yards), and TE Jimmy Graham, who left for Green Bay, and he's hoping 34-year-old Brandon Marshall has enough left to be a red-zone weapon. The once-elite Seattle secondary was weakened considerably with the loss of All-Pro Richard Sherman, now a 49er.

San Francisco 49ers What a difference a QB can make. Jimmy Garoppolo came from the Pats in November and went 5-0. WR Marquise Goodwin (962 yards) was his No. 1 guy. RB Carlos Hyde, who took care of the ground game with 1,288 yards, (938 rushing, 350 receiving) is gone, as the 49ers signed ex-Viking Jerick McKinnon. Grabbing ex-Seattle CB Richard Sherman will immediately improve a weak secondary.

Arizona Cardinals Desperately needing a QB, Arizona traded up for UCLA's Josh Rosen, who suffered two concussions his final year. "There were nine mistakes made ahead of me," snapped the cocky Rosen, drafted 10th overall. The return of Larry Fitzgerald and David Johnson (who missed 15 games last season after leading the NFL in yards from scrimmage in 2016) will help Rosen once he takes over for Sam Bradford. Chandler Jones and his NFL-leading 17 sacks leads the defense.

SUPER BOWL LIII PREDICTION

Eagles Defeat Steelers 27-24

Look for role reversal inside Mercedes-Benz Stadium, because this time it will be Carson Wentz catching the “Philly Special” touchdown while Nick Foles is on the sidelines. Wentz, his surgical knee as good as new, warms to the challenge of an early shootout with Ben Roethlisberger, two hulking quarterbacks who effortlessly shed would-be sackers. Big Ben’s bomb to Antonio Brown gives the Steelers a 24-17 lead before Wentz responds with a TD strike to Zach Ertz.

And then it happens. Michael Bennett forces a Le’Veon Bell fumble that Fletcher Cox recovers near midfield with less than

two minutes remaining. Wentz breaks the tension in the huddle just like Joe Montana did back in Super Bowl XXIII. “Look,” he says, pointing into the stands, “isn’t that Vladimir Putin?” Wentz rifles a pass in the flat to a wide-open Nelson Agholor, who takes it deep into Steelers’ territory. Jake Elliott’s field goal as time expires gives the Eagles—who ended their 47-year championship drought a year earlier—a 27-24 victory, and back-to-back Super Bowl championships. ❖

Danny Sheridan appears frequently in newspapers and on TV.



Carson Wentz of the Philadelphia Eagles scrambles to avoid the defense of the Pittsburgh Steelers. The next Super Bowl could be the battle of Pennsylvania.

SHERIDAN’S SUPER BOWL LIII ODDS

The Favorites	Strong Bets	Worth A \$50 Chance	Avoid Like A 40-Cent Smoke
New England 7:1 Five Super Bowl victories since 2001, 10 AFC titles and Tom Brady. Enough said.	L.A. Rams 12:1 Minnesota 12:1 Green Bay 15:1 New Orleans 15:1 Jacksonville 18:1 Atlanta 20:1 San Francisco 20:1	Carolina 50:1 Oakland 50:1 Denver 50:1 Kansas City 60:1 Seattle 75:1 Tennessee 75:1	Indianapolis 100,000:1 Tampa Bay 250,000:1 Miami 1 Million:1 Washington 1 Million:1 Cincinnati 5 Million:1 Arizona 1 Billion:1 Chicago 1 Trillion:1
Philadelphia 9:1 The defending champs are a strong bet to repeat.	Possibles	The Long Shots	Are You Nuts?
Pittsburgh 10:1 More Super Bowl wins than any other team.	L.A. Chargers 25:1 Dallas 30:1 Houston 40:1	Baltimore 100:1 N.Y. Giants 100:1 Detroit 500:1 Buffalo 1,000:1	Cleveland 10 Sextillion:1 N.Y. Jets 1 Googolplex:1

WhiskyFest

The longest running and best attended whisky festival in North America

The Wine Spectator California Scholarship Foundation presents:

SAN FRANCISCO

November 2, 2018

NEW YORK

December 4, 2018

Enjoy a night of great whiskies, great food,
expert seminars, and good friends.



"I love WhiskyFest. Every year it is an awesome opportunity to try unique and hard-to-find spirits." — Ricky

"WOW. What an amazing night. This was my second year attending WhiskyFest and I am already counting down to WhiskyFest 2019. VIP ticket well worth the price and then some. Highly recommend to any whisky lovers." — Bhavesh

"Yet another stellar event from the WhiskyFest team... An incredible evening of unique pours and one-off seminars. WhiskyFest is always a huge draw and this was no exception." — Ewan

WhiskyFest.com

Sponsored by
Whisky
ADVOCATE

There Are Over 350 Whiskies Poured At WhiskyFest. Find A New Favorite!

1000 Stories	Dove Tale Rum	Kilbeggan	Speyburn
A. Smith Bowman	Dubliner	Kirk and Sweeney Rum	Stagg Jr.
Aberfeldy	Eagle Rare	Knappogue Castle	Stranahan's
Amador	Elijah Craig	Knob Creek	Taylor
Ardbeg	Ezra Brooks	Lagavulin	Teeling Whiskey
Arran	Few Spirits	Laphroaig	The Temple Bar
Baker's	Four Roses	Larceny Bourbon	Thomas Handy
Balcones Distilling	Gentleman Jack	Ledaig	Tincup
The Balvenie	George Dickel	Limestone Branch Distillery	Tobermory
Barton 1792	George T. Stagg	Little Book	Toki
Basil Hayden	Glen Grant	Lux Row Distillers	Tomatin
The BenRiach	Glen Moray	The Macallan	Tullibardine
Benromach	The GlenDronach	Maker's Mark	Tyrconnell
Bib & Tucker	Glenfiddich	Masterson's	Walsh Whiskey
Bird Dog	Glenglassaugh	Michter's	West Cork Distillers
Blade and Bow	Glengoyne	Nikka	Western Spirits
Blanton's	Glenlivet	Nooku	Westland
Blood Oath	Glenmorangie	Oban	Wheatley Vodka
Booker's	The Glenrothes	Old Elk	WhistlePig
Bowmore	Hakushu	Old Fitzgerald	Widow Jane
Bozal Mezcal	Heaven Hill	Old Forester	Wild Turkey
Brenne	Heaven's Door	Old Pulteney	William Larue Weller
Brixton Mash Destroyer	Henry McKenna	Old Rip Van Winkle	Woodford Reserve
Bruichladdich	Hibiki	Parker's Heritage Collection	Woodinville
Buffalo Trace	High West	Paul John Indian Single Malt	Writers' Tears
Bulleit	Highland Park	Pikesville Rye	Yamazaki
Bunnahabhain	Hillrock Estate Distillery	The Pogues	Yellow Spot
Bushmills	Hotel Tango	The Quiet Man	
Casa Noble	Hudson	Rebel Yell	
Charbay Distillery	I.W. Harper	Redbreast	
Compass Box	The Irishman	Redemption	
Connemara	Jack Daniel's Single Barrel Collection	Redwood Empire	
Cooper & Thief	Jim Beam	Russell's Reserve	
Craigellachie	John & Allisa's	Sazerac	
Crown Royal	John Drew Rye	The Sexton	
David Nicholson	Johnnie Walker	Slane Irish Whiskey	
Dead Rabbit	Kavalan	Sonoma Distilling Co.	
Dewar's	Kentucky Peerless Distilling		
Distiller's Selection			
Douglas Laing			

*Whisky list is subject to change.
Not all whiskies available in all cities.*



Order Tickets at WhiskyFest.com or Call 888-718-4253.

\$4 service fee per ticket; \$5 per ticket for telephone orders.

Cigars *in the* Movies

Cigars and the silver screen have had a love affair almost from the beginning. But far from being typecast, these burning costars have played a range of roles **BY MARSHALL FINE**

W

hat is the most indelible cigar image from the movies? That depends on how you judge. Does it belong to the actor whose screen image is most closely associated with cigars? The obvious answer then is Groucho Marx, who made his cigar an almost inseparable part of his persona—first on film, then on television and in real life.

Then again, it could belong to Clint Eastwood. Now an Oscar-winning filmmaker, he rode into cinematic history with a cheroot plugged into the corner of his mouth in the spaghetti westerns of Sergio Leone. Beginning with *A Fistful of Dollars* in 1964, he kept the cigar through most of the westerns that charted his career rise. It became as much a part of his image as his trademark squint and unshaven jaw.

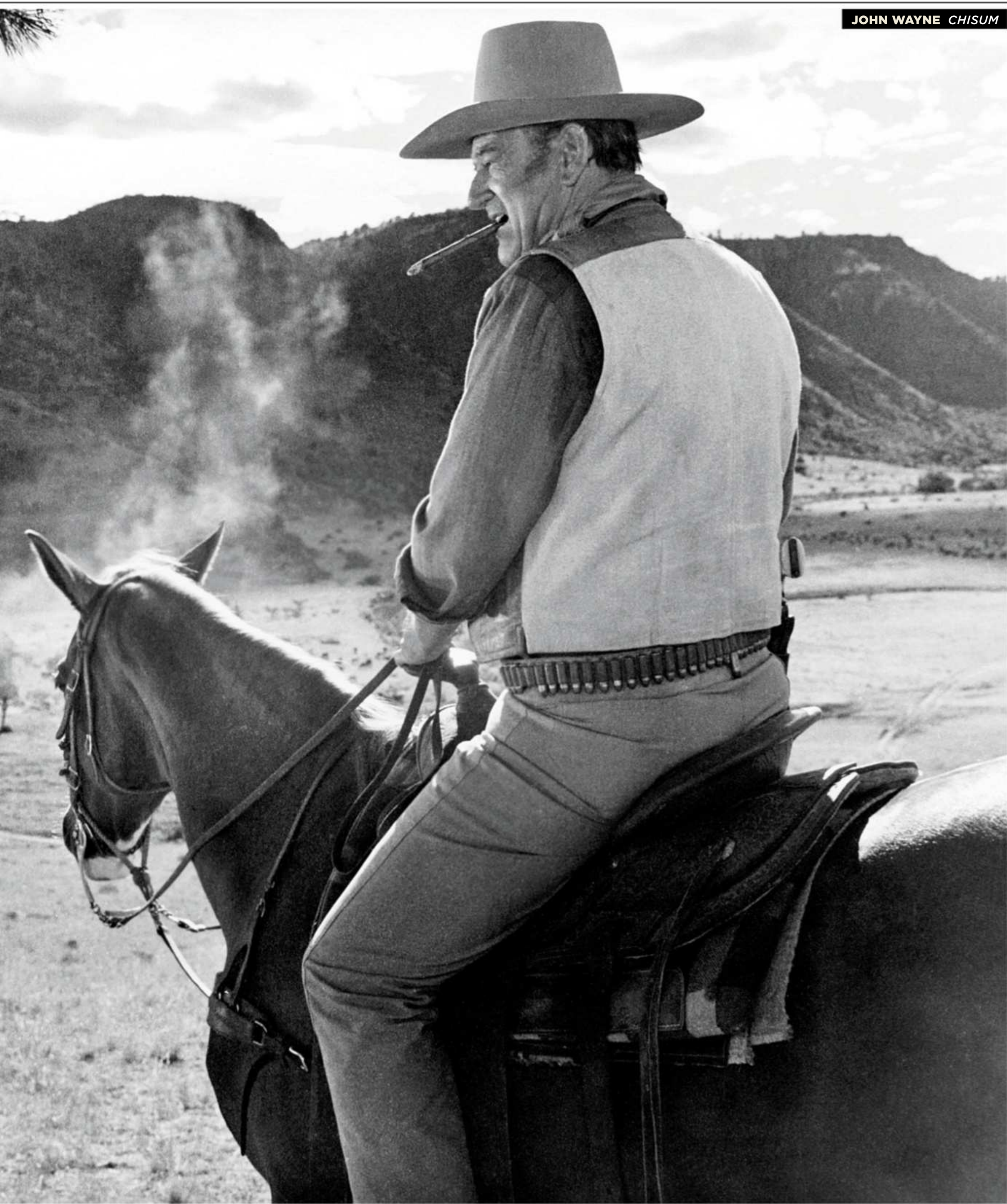
Or maybe you judge a cigar's impact based on a specific moment—the way it makes you practically smell a cigar when you recall that scene. Think Robert De Niro puffing away in a movie theater in *Cape Fear*, and Steve McQueen being offered his first cigar after his prison escape in *Papillon*. Those scenes don't work without the cigar.

Sometimes the cigar is a prop that perfectly telegraphs a character: the aggressive swagger of Al Pacino's Tony Montana in *Scarface*, for example, or the huckster confidence of W.C. Fields as he mutters to a child trying to interrupt his sales pitch, "Go away kid—you bother me."

If you examine the most famous movie moments involving cigars, you find themes that tie them together.



JOHN SPRINGER COLLECTION/CORBIS/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES



Cigars can be symbols of power, whether wielded by crime kingpins (De Niro in *The Untouchables*) or business magnates (Michael Douglas in *Wall Street*). Yet there's also a scrappy, blue-collar element to a stogie gripped happily in the corner of the mouth of a working guy, sleeves rolled up. Think of George Kennedy playing TWA mechanic Joe Patroni, using common sense to avert disaster with a cigar clenched in his jaw in 1970's *Airport*.

The ultimate large-and-in-charge, on-screen cigar smoker is based on a real person. Winston Churchill smokes in the movies dozens of times as CIGAR AFICIONADO documented in the June 2018 issue. The Gary Oldman portrayal in *Darkest Hour* even had the prime minister enjoying a breakfast-in-bed smoke.

Macho honchos of filmdom often wield cigars as scepters that signify their stature as leaders of men: the muscled Arnold Schwarzenegger as the head mercenary in *Predator*; Ron Perlman as a long-suffering and good-hearted demon in *Hellboy*; or Hugh Jackman as the Wolverine in no fewer than nine films. Each chomps down on a cigar as they kick ass and take names.

Then come the sophisticates: the movie characters who make a stogie look dashing. In their hands, cigars become accessories of the well-heeled man, whether it's Sydney Greenstreet in *The Maltese Falcon* or McQueen in *The Thomas Crown Affair*.

The cigar was the smart-aleck punctuation to the wit of Groucho, just as it was with Fields, the perfect accoutrement to the snide hustler that he inevitably played in all of his films. Fields' cigar could function as a baton, with which he conducted business, or as a shield meant to ward off indignities.

Dr. Strangelove, Or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb offers one of the great cigar smokers in cinema: Gen. Jack D. Ripper, played by Sterling Hayden. In this dark sendup of

the Cold War, Ripper enthusiastically smokes a Churchill as he launches an unauthorized nuclear attack on Russia to prevent what he imagines is an international Communist plot "to sap and impurify all of our precious bodily fluids."

Mel Brooks found a way to make cigars monstrously funny in *Young Frankenstein*. He parodies a famous moment from *Bride of Frankenstein* in which the monster is taught civilizing manners by a blind hermit, with the monster puffing delightedly on a cigar while saying, "Good! Good!" In Brooks' version, the monster (played by Peter Boyle) receives similar schooling from another blind hermit played by Gene Hackman. However, this character is hilariously inept, casually lighting the monster's thumb on fire.

Cigars meant something different in the comedy of Charlie Chaplin, whose Little Tramp lived a life on the fringe, where a cigar—even a discarded butt of a cigar—was a treasure. In the right comic actor's hands, cigars become emblems of rebellion, at times contributing to joyously crass bits of business. The cigar stuffed into the corner of the mouth (along with that dangerously cocked eyebrow) lent a note of crazed bravado to John Belushi's Capt. Wild Bill Kelso in *1941*. A long, slim cigar added to the rule-bending, rakish air of John Candy in *Uncle Buck*.

The movies also have their share of a certain kind of working-stiff cigar smoker. Jack Nicholson had a blue-collar swagger as the stogie-smoking sailor forced to bring a confused young seaman to the brig in *The Last Detail*. So did Lee Marvin as a Depression-era hobo in *Emperor of the North* and Will Smith as the alien-blasting pilot in *Independence Day*.

In *Papillon*, McQueen plays the title character, a thief wrongly convicted of murder and sentenced to Devil's Island. During an escape attempt he lands at a leper colony where he is captured and taken to their leader (Anthony Zerbe). His face a mask of



MICHAEL DOUGLAS WALL STREET



AL PACINO SCARFACE



CLINT EASTWOOD HIGH PLAINS DRIFTER



GARY OLDMAN DARKEST HOUR



WILL SMITH INDEPENDENCE DAY

LEFT: SCREENPROD / PHOTONONSTOP / ALAMY; RIGHT FROM TOP: SCREENPROD / PHOTO-
NONSTOP / ALAMY; COLLECTION CHRISTOPHEL/ALAMY; 20TH CENTURY FOX/PHOTOFEST

disfiguring growths, his fingers mostly stumps, the leper chief tells Papillon that his people tend to kill intruders, then puffs on the cigar he is holding and says, “Do you like cigars?”

“When I can get ‘em,” Papillon replies.

“Try this one,” the leper chief says, leaning into the light to reveal his horrifying face and extending the gnarled remains of his hand, holding out a half-smoked robusto. McQueen’s eyes flash with fear that is quickly overtaken by his defiant urge for freedom—and he wraps his lips around the cigar and puffs up a storm. Amazed and amused at his audacity, the leper asks how he knew his leprosy wasn’t contagious, to which Papillon replies with contained fury, “I didn’t.”

De Niro’s cinematic romance with fine tobacco is most often associated with dangerous characters. As Max Cady in Martin Scorsese’s 1991 remake of *Cape Fear*, he weaponizes a maduro-wrapped monstrosity, firing it up in a movie theater crowded with families as he begins a psychological war with his quarry. His chillingly raucous laughter makes his clouds of cigar smoke seem

like poisonous fumes meant to infect the life of his target.

As Al Capone in *The Untouchables*, De Niro employs a cigar in one particularly memorable scene, when Kevin Costner’s Eliot Ness invades the lobby of the hotel where Capone lives, inflamed by the murder of one of his men.

Descending a massive staircase to confront Ness while surrounded by armed henchmen, De Niro’s Capone is dressed like an Italian nobleman: gray suit under a luxurious camel hair Chesterfield coat, white fedora cocked fashionably to one side, a stylish pair of sunglasses (even though he’s indoors)—and a large unlit cigar, snuggled into the corner of his mouth like a pet. When he threatens Ness he clutches the cigar like a tiny version of the baseball bat he so memorably uses on an underling’s skull in another scene in which the hapless victim was the one smoking a cigar.

The original cigar-chomping movie gangster was Edward G. Robinson. From his career-launching role as Rico Bandello in 1931’s *Little Caesar*, Robinson was identified by a trademark snarling sneer created, in part, by keeping a cigar gripped tightly



ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER PREDATOR

in a corner of his mouth. Robinson's distinctive delivery inspired comic impressionists for a couple of generations—and cigars became a Robinson signature, in films as diverse as *Double Indemnity* and *The Cincinnati Kid*, in which Robinson played a sophisticated gambler with a taste for commanding smokes.

In the Coen brothers' gangster flick *Miller's Crossing*, a cigar leavens an otherwise chillingly violent scene. Mob boss Leo O'Bannon (Albert Finney) is enjoying a cigar before turning in. Alerted that a brace of hit men have entered his mansion, he snuffs out his smoke, puts it in his robe pocket and crawls under the bed. Shooting one of the intruders in the leg, he takes his Tommy Gun and slides to safety down a low-hanging roof. After dispatching the other gunman, O'Bannon riddles the retreating getaway car with bullets. Convinced that his work is done, he calmly retrieves the cigar butt and returns it to his mouth.

When you look a little closer, you'll find that a lot of the most sophisticated cinematic cigar smokers also had some sort of outlaw streak, whether it's Paul Newman's tuxedo-clad con man in *The Sting* or Clark Gable's Rhett Butler in *Gone With the Wind*, a gambler and privateer with a heart of gold. Business sharpie and master-thief Thomas Crown favored lonsdales and tailored suits, whether he was played by McQueen or Pierce Brosnan.

The gluttonous Orson Welles, who consumed large cigars by the bushel offscreen, most famously smoked on-screen in his restored masterwork, *Touch of Evil*. Welles plays corrupt American cop Hank Quinlan, who growls at everyone with a Churchill permanently implanted in one side of his face. In a similar vein, John Huston plays the villain in *Chinatown*, casually caressing his cigars as he talks about how far a father's love can go.

Cigars meant different things in the Old West. When John Wayne was seen enjoying a cigar, it usually seemed to be just that: a moment of enjoyment, relaxation or contemplation. Think of the opening scene of *Chisum*, in which he sits atop his horse on a hill, surveying his domain, unaware of the forces of history heading his way. In this film and several others, cigars were for that moment of kicking back, showing the Duke was just one of the guys.

With Eastwood, the cigar seemed to work as a brake on a temper that was quick to favor violence. With his cigar in his mouth, whether it was his Man with No Name in Leone's films or the Stranger in his own *High Plains Drifter*, Eastwood was a taciturn loner not looking for trouble. When trouble found him, the cigar usually came out long enough for Eastwood to explain what a mistake that was—and then returned to his mouth in order to coolly blast the problem out of existence.

Smoking cigars is seen as a macho pursuit, and while women smoking cigars in films are rare, there are some notable examples: Angelina Jolie seducing Antonio Banderas with a cigar in *Original Sin*; Sharon Stone as a cigar-smoking

gunslinger in *The Quick and the Dead*; Famke Janssen as an assassin who likes a killer smoke in *Goldeneye*.

The closest thing to a movie that actually celebrates the art of the cigar is the aptly named 1995 film *Smoke*, written by novelist Paul Auster and directed by Wayne Wang. It is set in the Brooklyn cigar store owned by Auggie Wren (Harvey Keitel), who serves as a kind of curator for the stories of his customers' lives. The film's numerous storylines include a subplot about a shipment of illicit Cubans but, really, it's as much about the camaraderie of time and tobacco shared in a comfortable space.

At one point, William Hurt (as Paul, a writer and a regular customer) walks into the store during what Auggie describes as "a philosophical discussion about women and cigars."

Hurt's character connects the two subjects to the story of how Sir Walter Raleigh introduced England's Queen Elizabeth I to tobacco. That leads to the tale of how Sir Walter won a bet that he could weigh the smoke in a single cigar.

"You can't do that—it's like weighing air," one of the cigar-store kibitzers objects.

"I admit it's strange. It's like weighing someone's soul," Hurt replies.

Sir Walter's solution? He weighed the unsmoked cylinder, then smoked the cigar, saving the ashes. He weighed the ashes and the butt, deducted the second number from the first and—voila!—the weight of the smoke in a cigar.

"Sir Walter," Hurt observes, "was a clever guy." ♦

Contributing editor Marshall Fine is critic-in-residence at The Picture House Regional Film Center in Pelham, NY.

MASTER COCKTAIL CREATIVITY

WITH A GIN MULE

BOMBAY
SAPPHIRE



INGREDIENTS

1 PART BOMBAY SAPPHIRE® GIN
4 PARTS FEVER TREE® GINGER BEER
1/4 PART FRESH LIME JUICE
OR 1/2 OF A LIME



BE BRILLIANT AND INSPIRED. DRINK RESPONSIBLY!
©2018. BOMBAY SAPPHIRE AND ITS TRADE DRESS ARE TRADEMARKS.
IMPORTED BY THE BOMBAY SPIRITS COMPANY U.S.A., CORAL GABLES, FL. GIN - 47% ALC. BY VOL.
FEVER-TREE AND ITS TRADE DRESS ARE TRADEMARKS OF FEVERTREE LTD.

Whale Tales

Stories Of High Rollers
And Their Over-The-Top
Casino Amenities

◆ ◆ ◆
The gambler sits under glass. Out on the massive terrace of his villa, inside the air-conditioned solarium of Las Vegas's most elite casino within a casino, reserved for the highest of high rollers, he asks me to not reveal where he is as he luxuriates in his posh surroundings. "They will offer you stuff like promo chips and private aviation and discounts based on loss," he says nonchalantly. "Plus they have to treat you exceptionally well—which they all do."

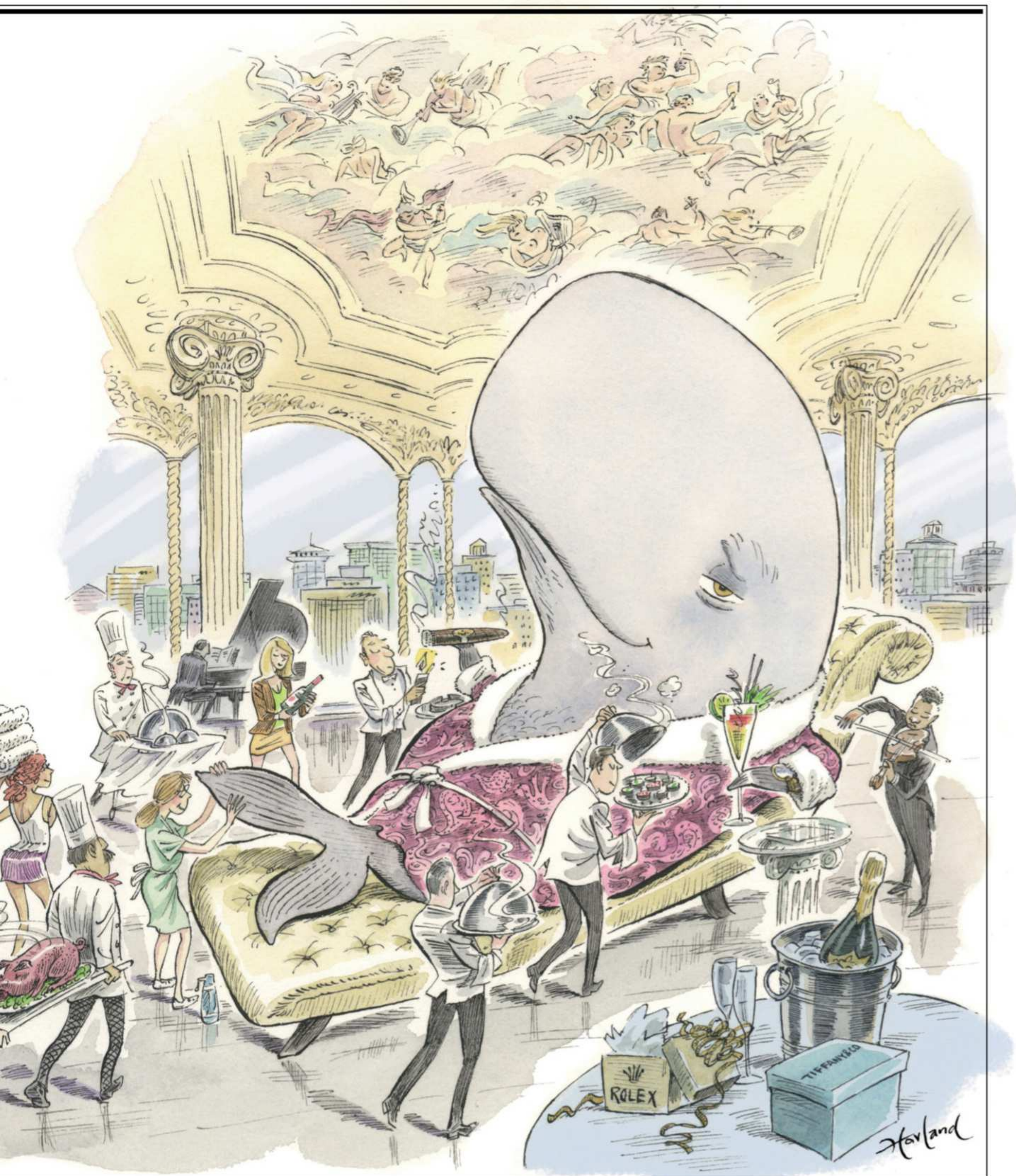
They, of course, are casino personnel, and they hunger for high-stakes action from deep-pocketed customers like him.

He has just eaten a superb lunch of Dover sole, and smiles as he recalls his all-time largest win on a single hand—\$250,000. But last night was a hard one, and the losses piled up on the blackjack tables as he made five-figure bets, his norm.

His name is RJ Cipriani, a controversial figure who courts press. According to published accounts, he worked with the FBI to shut down a cocaine and money laundering operation

BY MICHAEL KAPLAN
ILLUSTRATIONS BY GARY HOVLAND





and was once banned from Vegas casinos under suspicion of having been involved in the operation himself. (A letter from the FBI confirmed he was not, and he's once again welcome.) He speaks in the easy lingo of so-called whales, talking about about his promo chips (basically free money to gamble with, offered by casinos as inducements for merely showing up), discounts (rebates on loss, as much as 20 percent) and gifts received from casinos (including a Rolex Yacht-Master II, valued at around \$50,000).

Cipriani, also known as Robin Hood 702 (due to his tendency to give chunks of winnings to those in need) ranks among the elite casino players who wager \$25,000 per hand or more. He claims to have gambled alongside numerous celebrities, including boxing legend Joe Frazier. It didn't go well. "He split 10s and hit 10s; then the dealer got a six card 21," Cipriani says, still sounding steamed. "I almost got into a fight with him over that. Who splits 10s?"

"My guys are entrepreneurs, owners of strip clubs and bars, people who have invented stuff. My biggest player has a \$10 million permanent line of credit."

Most of those who circle in the same orbit as Cipriani tend to not come from the most blue-chip of backgrounds or have the most buttoned-down of rich-guy livelihoods. "Doctors and lawyers are stiff; forget about them," says Steve Cyr, director of player development at Palms Casino Resort. "My guys are entrepreneurs, owners of strip clubs and bars, people who have invented stuff. My biggest player has a \$10 million permanent line of credit. He wants privacy but also loves big events. He sat up front for the McGregor vs. Mayweather fight—and he had 14 tickets. This guy is among maybe 100 people who can go to a casino and casually blow \$1 million. They all get what they want."

Despite having access to all those goodies—and happily partaking—Cipriani states that he gambles for the money, not for the perks. He claims to do it for a living. "My goal is to take as much money as possible out of these places," Cipriani says. Sometimes, when he does well the perks are reduced. "This trip they cut off my up-front because I did well when I came out here last," he says, referring to promo chips casinos give for checking into the hotel and agreeing to gamble. "Keep beating them and they will cut it off. Luckily, though, there are casinos all over the world and casinos will take a shot at you when you are willing to post \$1 million or more."

Wrapped around his wrist is a Rolex Sky-Dweller. I wonder if he got that one as a result of gambling-den largess. "No, this is mine," he says. "It's my lucky watch. But I've got boxes of Rolexes at home." Some were birthday gifts from casinos. "I just got a thing from Foxwoods where they are having a weekend in Tuscany with Andrea Bocelli," he says. Will he go? "No. I already know him. Been there, done that. Through being a high roller, I've pretty much done it all."

There is no question that casino whales are jaded and difficult to impress. The latest joint to take a shot at grabbing their collective attention is Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas. Late last year, the casino debuted its 21 brand new Boulevard Penthouse suites, all unique, all spacious, all designed by top-flight names. They are modern and cheeky and plush, loaded with original art and only-in-Vegas details: an ivory-colored grand piano, Pegasus on a pole, a cage with a swing inside it and wraparound terraces with views that seem to go on forever.

They occupy four floors and loudly announce that the casino is now going after the highest of high-rollers, offering them all the accommodations and accoutrements that they expect. For one, in order to make the trip into Vegas more pleasant, Cosmopolitan recently purchased a Gulfstream jet that replaces the chartered flights it had been arranging for top customers.

Since the largest players are drawn to Vegas primarily by gambling, what's likeliest to resonate is a private gaming room that Cosmopolitan has dubbed The Reserve. Designed by Adam Tihany, it's a luxurious, wood-paneled hideaway, centered by a lounge area featuring a well-stocked bar (rare single malts and a \$56,000 bottle of Louis XIII Black Pearl Cognac reside behind the bar) and private gaming enclaves on either side. Cuban cigar boxes are on display in the large humidor.

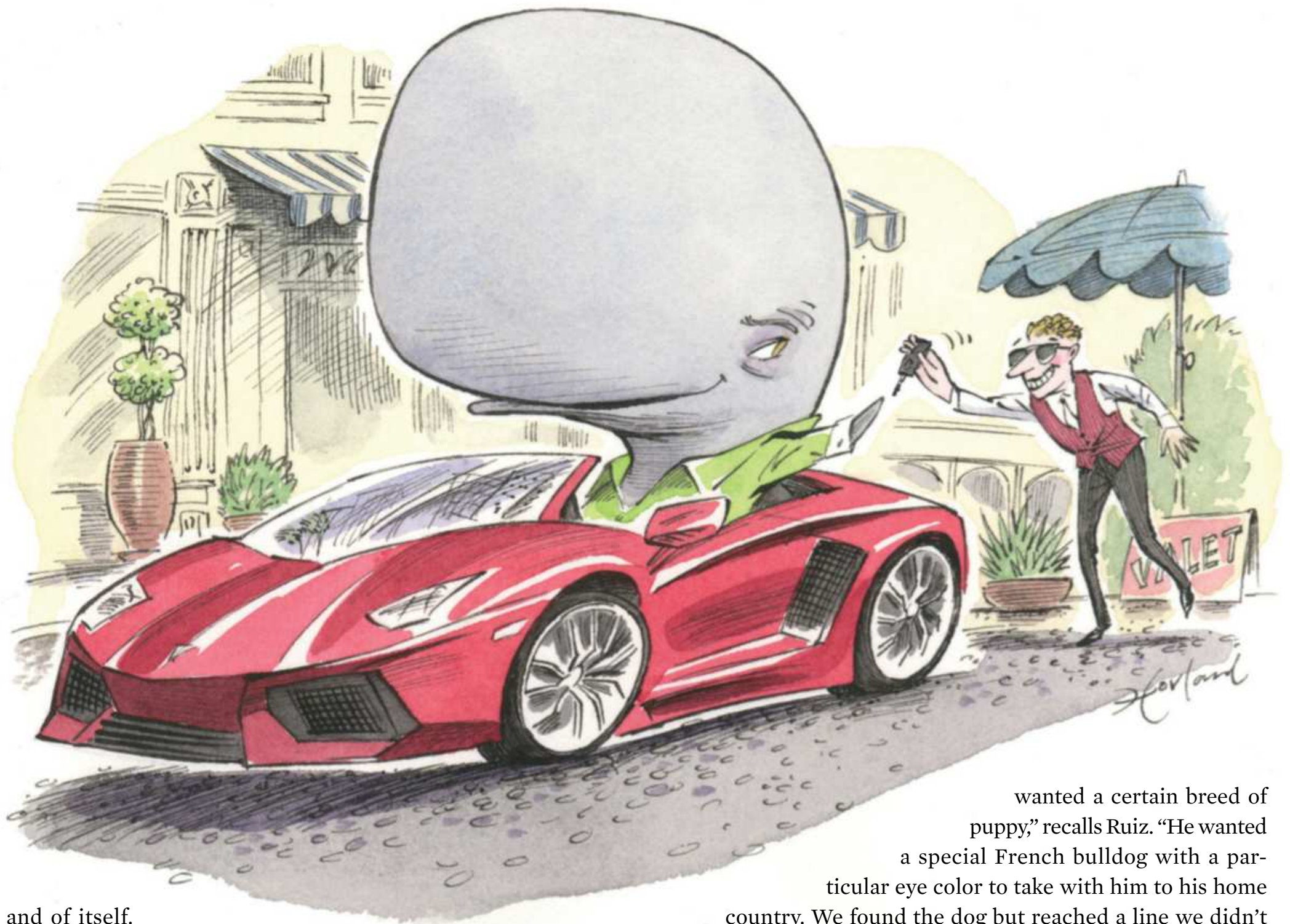
Each gambling refuge contains a single table. Entry is by invitation only, and getting a seat—actually, getting the entire table—requires a willingness to risk \$1 million or more. Single bets top out at around \$200,000. "That is the maximum," asserts Brian Benowitz, the senior vice president of casino operations for the Cosmopolitan. "That is the maximum risk we are willing to take at this time."

Considering the gusto exhibited by The Reserve's heartiest gamblers, it's easy to believe that they would bet more if only the casino would allow it. Perhaps they compensate with time spent at the table. "Guys come to The Reserve and gamble for two to three days straight," says Benowitz. "A lot of players don't sleep. They go back to their rooms for showers, take some time to eat, go to the terrace for a smoke," he says, even though smoking is perfectly fine inside The Reserve. "Or [they] spend some time in the massage chair."

The chair is no ordinary device that you might find in a Brookstone catalog, but a \$9,000 contraption that gives sublime rubdowns. It's a coveted item in China, but here in Vegas it provides no competition for a seat at the table, where the gamblers' retinues enjoy being close to the action for as long as they're welcome. "These guys will often show up with an entourage," says Benowitz. "But the entourage can last only so long."

The friends take breaks from the marathon gambling sessions, rotate in and out, and know when it is time to leave the gambler to his own devices. Inevitably, probably in the thick of a losing streak, the player will say, "Everyone gone!"

"Then the doors to the gaming room close and the entourage moves to the lounge," continues Benowitz, "which can be a party



in and of itself.

They eat, drink, watch sports, use our gambling app to bet.”

Wooing the big whales is far from easy, and each one of the highest-rolling casinos in Las Vegas competes for millions of dollars in potential revenue from the world’s largest bettors. At the Cosmopolitan, it falls upon Danny Ruiz, executive vice president of international marketing, to make sure the casino gets its slice of the action. “We go all over the world for marketing trips,” says Ruiz, referring to the jaunts he takes to woo players from their home turf to Las Vegas. “We are not allowed to market in Mainland China, so I take trips to Hong Kong for meetings and private dinners and luncheons.”

As is the Chinese way, Ruiz is often invited to casino customers’ homes for lavish banquets that feature unusual dishes. “I ate a worm casserole,” he all but brags, recalling a trip to Hong Kong. He didn’t let a hint of discomfort show. “It was worth eating,” he says. “The person I visited wound up making the trip out here.”

Once a whale arrives at the casino, Ruiz goes to great lengths to keep the player happy and gambling. He’ll greet the whale with bottles of fine wine, boxes of cigars, perhaps a hard-to-find handbag for the wife or girlfriend. Ruiz even gave one guest the sexy swing setup, and guided another to the English company that makes an elaborate safe situated in one of the penthouses.

How far will Ruiz go to meet an outlandish request? “Somebody

wanted a certain breed of puppy,” recalls Ruiz. “He wanted a special French bulldog with a particular eye color to take with him to his home country. We found the dog but reached a line we didn’t want to cross when it came to the veterinary process. We told him we could get him the dog but he’s on his own after that. The guy wound up not taking the dog but he was not that disappointed. He could have had the dog if he wanted it.”

Another hard line at the Cosmopolitan involves allowing gamblers to play their casino hosts against one another. Cipriani does it routinely: “I call hosts and say, ‘Foxwoods is giving me \$100,000 in promos for walking through the door. Can you beat it?’ Sometimes they do; sometimes they tell me it’s too strong.”

“We don’t discuss deal points or bargain on price,” says Benowitz, acknowledging that others do. “If someone offers something more somewhere else, and that serves as the tipping point, then that player is not for us. We don’t get into bidding wars [for players]. We believe in what we are offering.”

It’s an easy position to take now, with Cosmopolitan having the newest and coolest digs on the Strip, but that will not be the case forever. An upcoming enterprise called the Drew is under construction on the other end of the strip. And right down the block and around the corner from the Cosmopolitan, the Palms is in the throes of a \$620 million renovation that will include a revamping of its once infamous high-roller suites that came complete with a basketball court and rooftop infinity pool. Plus there will be new restaurants, nightclubs and craft cocktail lounges.

Chances are then that the Cosmopolitan will not soon be welcoming a wealthy customer who is known for putting ungodly sums of money at risk in casinos. He also drives a hard bargain before stacking his chips. “When this player comes in, there are 30 deal points that get signed off on,” says Cyr, making the man’s gambling trips sound more like corporate negotiations than Vegas getaways. “He wants to split Aces four times. He wants to double down on any two cards. He can switch dealers any time he wants. As soon as he lands, he gets \$20,000 for airfare. If he loses \$1 million and pays in 60 days”—like a lot of high rollers, he plays on markers—“he gets an 18 percent discount. So he loses only \$820,000.”

According to one casino executive who asked not to be named, that practice is hardly unusual. “Discounts are the bottom line,” he says. “Maybe the villa is better at Bellagio or there are new penthouses at Cosmo, but—provided that one casino is in a similar universe with the others, when you are a top-tier player choosing where to gamble—it is a business deal: comps, discounts, rules are what they care about most.”

The executive adds that new and splashy spaces from hot competitors can make whales particularly slippery to hold onto, especially when they leave the casino. “I took a big player to dinner at a competing casino and a top guy from there walked up to us,” he remembers. “He said to me, ‘Oh, I am so happy to see you. Welcome to the property. You need to check out these rooms that we just remodeled.’ The player I

was with was, like, ‘Oh, really? Let’s go see them.’ Meanwhile, I’m afraid of losing him...The goal is to keep players in the building but people want to leave for a variety of reasons.”

Sometime they even want to leave the country. “Things have become more corporate and systems have become tighter” in the United States, says the unnamed casino executive, explaining the wanderlust of whales. “Since a big baccarat player can light you up for \$20 million, we’re constantly assessing his play and calculating what we want to give him.”

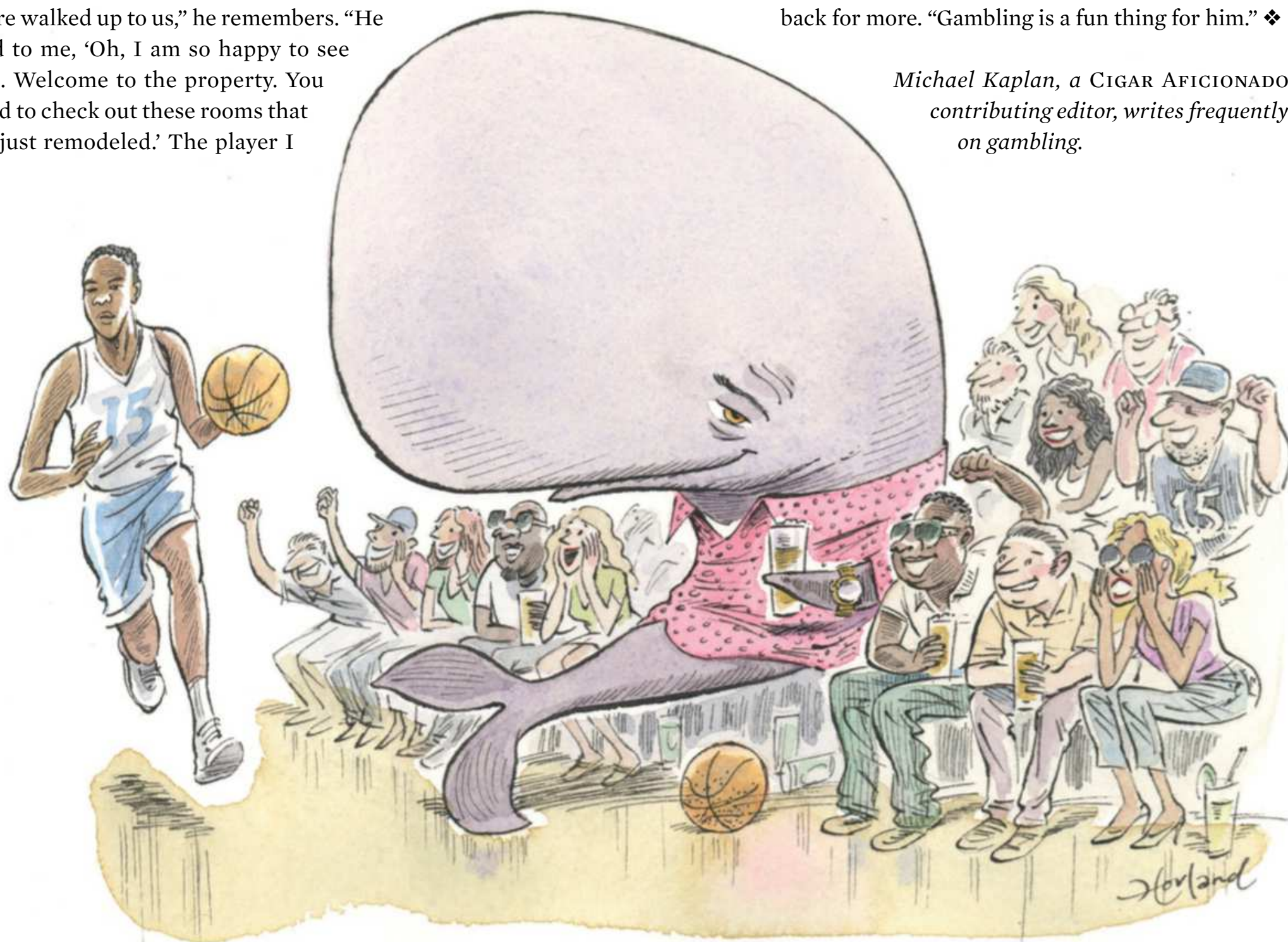
One way around the tight oversight is to forsake Las Vegas for less obvious destinations. Cipriani, for example, recently flew to the Hard Rock in Punta Cana Dominican Republic, lured there by piles of promo chips and a high-stakes blackjack tournament with a comped entry fee.

Prior to joining Palms, Cyr took one of his big customers to Baha Mar, the recently launched island resort in the Bahamas. “He bets \$50,000 per hand at baccarat and three spots of \$20,000 at blackjack,” Cyr says. “When he and his wife wanted to take a private yacht to a private island for dinner, I was there and sent them on their way.”

No doubt, Cyr was waiting for them when they returned.

“Over the course of the trip, my player was up a lot and down a lot and ended up losing \$400,000,” says the host, making it clear that his whale didn’t mind all that much and will surely be back for more. “Gambling is a fun thing for him.” ♦

Michael Kaplan, a CIGAR AFICIONADO contributing editor, writes frequently on gambling.



It's pronounced OH-bin.

IT'S
PRONOUNCED
OH-BIN.

OBANTM

Please drink responsibly
Oban Single Malt Scotch Whisky, 43% Alc/Vol. Imported by Diageo, Norwalk, CT



You've got it all



BRONZE LABEL
NOW AVAILABLE

LA PALINA
ESTABLISHED 1896

LAPALINACIGARS.COM   

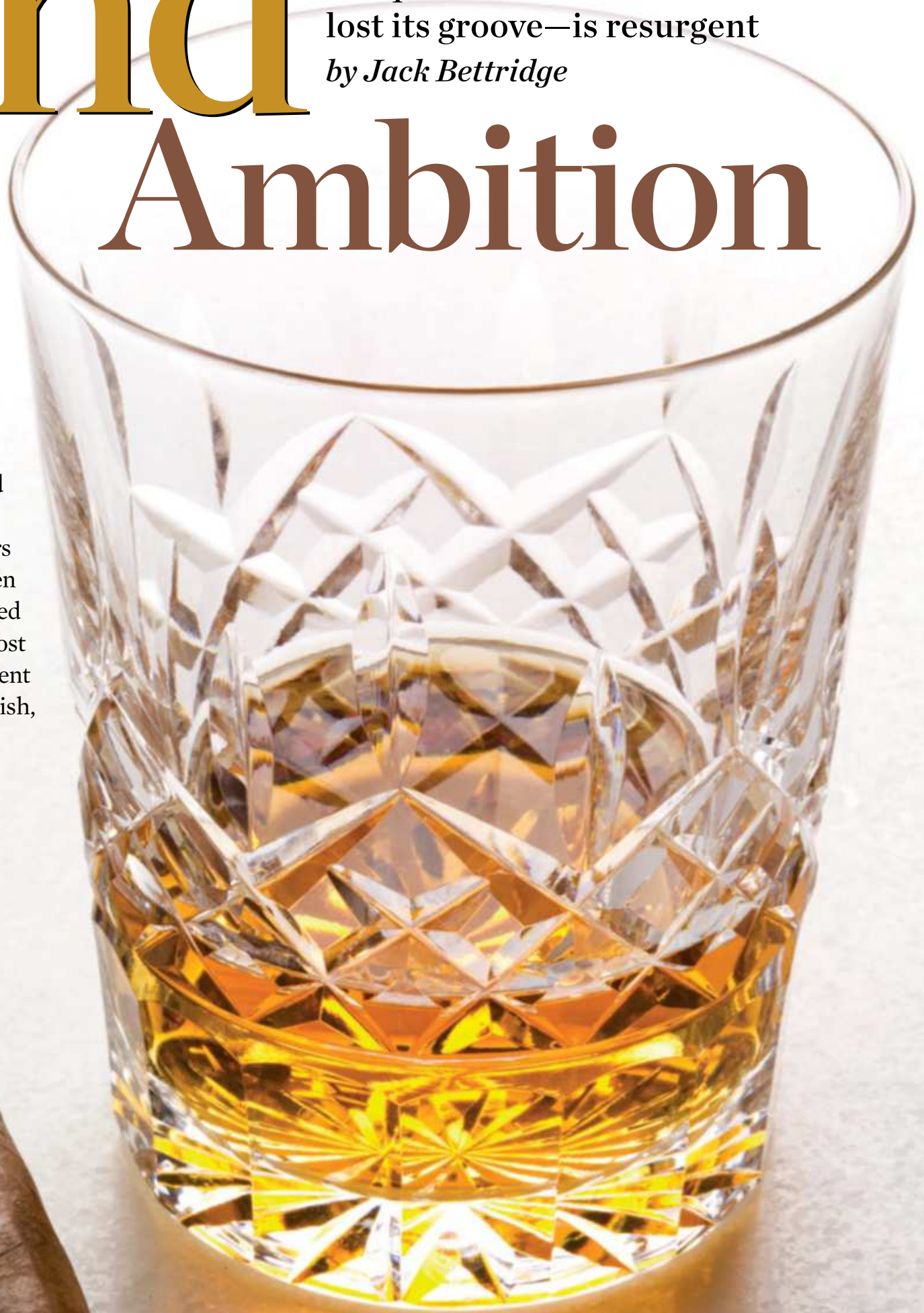
Blend

Ambition

The Scotch whisky that
conquered the world—but
lost its groove—is resurgent
by Jack Bettridge

W hisky appreciation made great leaps in past decades. Bourbon got some well-deserved props. Straight rye was reborn. Connoisseurs snagged trophy single malts. Craft distillers emerged and Asian entries appeared on store shelves. But one brown spirit—the one that first spanned the globe—lagged behind in enthusiasm: blended Scotch.

Look for that to change as blend makers are marketing older and finer examples, even applying aging techniques usually associated with single malts. From relatively low-cost brands like John Barr Reserve, with a recent makeover that includes a Sherry cask finish,





Making a sublime blended Scotch involves the careful mixing of aged grain and malt whiskies from some of Scotland's more than 100 distilleries.

to the highly limited The Last Drop, priced at a nosebleed \$4,000, the once-sleepy segment is gaining traction. You'll do yourself a favor by leaving your malt arrogance at the saloon door and taking a second look at blended Scotch.

Few spirits have a more venerable past. More than a century and a half ago, Scotch blends brought brand names and consistency to the sometimes-raw whisky world. Whisky alchemists with names like Dewar, Usher, Bell and Walker offered reliable and approachable drams, which they soon marketed the world over, gaining a popularity that single malts of the time couldn't have hoped to equal. In fact, blends still account for 90 percent of Scotch whisky sales. A little understanding of the category reveals its impressive potential.

While a slew of terms from geographic regions to types of aging vessels can define Scotch whiskies, they all come from two basic types of mash: malts or grains. Malt whisky is made strictly from barley. Grain whisky contains such cereals as corn and wheat. When made in one distillery, they can be called single malt or single grain whiskies. Blending creates other categories. Blended malt whiskies are mixtures of malts made at different distilleries. (You may have heard them called pure or vatted malts, but the law no longer permits those terms.) Blended Scotch whiskies are melded from both malt and grain whisky. Malts add body to a blend. Grains, while milder, contribute ethereal notes and play an important role in bonding the component malts.

So, why the knock on blended Scotch? Some of that is due to misapprehension. Outside Scotland, blended whisky can contain neutral grain spirits—that is, liquor that is not aged. But, in Scotland grain whisky must be matured at least three years. Another dig on blends relies on the perception that greater expense necessarily renders better quality. A few factors make malts generally costlier.

**You'll do yourself a favor by
leaving your malt arrogance
at the saloon door and taking a
second look at blended Scotch.**

The high cost of barley increases the price of malts. Furthermore, malt whisky must be made in a pot still, one batch at a time. Column stills, used for grain whiskies, are operated continuously making them cheaper to run. They also render fewer impurities, meaning the whisky needn't be aged as long to mellow off notes. The result is that cheaper blends often contain 60 to 80 percent of the younger, lighter grain whisky, which is sometimes regarded as filler.

The logic behind malt snobbery starts to fail when you move into high-priced fare—particularly those blends with age statements. Aging is expensive. At a certain age malt and grain whisky approach

parity in how much they cost to produce. Say you make a 25-year-old blend. By law, all the whisky in the blend, including the grain, must be 25 years or older. At that point grain whisky ceases to be so economical and as a result less may be used in favor of a more complex mixture of malts.

Whatever its age, you shouldn't expect a precise formula. Not just because recipes are proprietary, but because they don't exist—exactly. The blender's art lies in targeting a specific taste profile, not recreating a recipe verbatim. The components are gathered from some number of the 100 or so distilleries operating in Scotland at any given time. But they don't create a constant flow of liquid. New ones open, some close or sell their wares elsewhere. And just like cigar tobacco, even the same malts may vary from batch to batch. Nailing the identical taste in every bottle is what made blends so popular in the 19th century. At a time when malts could be erratic, blenders cracked the consistency code.

Components are not a complete secret, however. If a blender owns a malt distillery—or even a few—you can bet the blend is based on those whiskies. Dewar's built Aberfeldy in the Highlands in 1898 to ensure a steady supply of honey-like malt for its popular blend. Chivas Bros. owns the Speyside distillery Strathisla, so it's little surprise that its creamy and fruity sweetness is at the heart of

Chivas Regal. Spirits giant Diageo owns a dozen Scotch distilleries as well as the Johnnie Walker blend. The soft and sweet Cardhu is at its core, but they also typically contain Islay's Caol Ila to deliver a distinct peat smoke.

House styles—a smooth Speyside taste, say, or a distinct smokiness—differ from blend to blend, and sometimes you'll taste an obvious connection as you taste through a brand's expression by price point. Competing schools of thought also dictate how each blender works. Some like to feature a certain malt by making it stand out. Others aim at a nuanced mix that doesn't speak loudly of any one component. Once the Scotch is blended it can either be

bottled immediately or set aside for several months or even years in a marrying process.

Whatever the method, our tasting of nine blends showed that the category is brimming with possibilities. We paired each with two cigars: the mild-to-medium Padrón Dámaso No. 34 (87 points, \$14.50) with its honey charms; and the fuller bodied Rocky Patel Vintage 1990 Churchill (91 points, \$10.10) with notes of licorice, chocolate and cinnamon. We indicate our favorite partnership with each tasting note, but—the secret can be told—there were no losers. The whiskies range in price from \$18 to \$4,000 per bottle, showing the impressive possibilities of this eminently quaffable spirit. ❖

Blended Scotch and Cigars

Buchanan's Red Seal

(80 proof, \$165) The top-of-the-line Buchanan's Red Seal recalls a blend that was a favorite of Britain's Edward VII upon his ascension in 1901. Among its malts are rare examples from the Highland distillery Dalwhinnie. It is full of caramel, hard candy, toast and nuts, with light smoke and a touch of Stilton cheese. The blend drank best with the Padrón Dámaso, the almonds of which brought on toffee, while the cigar gained sweetness.

Chivas Regal 18

(80 proof, \$70) The Chivas company is studded with age-statement blends, ranging from its 12-year-old to 25, and the company also makes a 21, a 38 and a 40 under the mark Royal Salute. Don't think of this as the adolescent expression, however. It chimes with caramel, toffee, vanilla, berry, chocolate and hazelnut. The Dámaso's nuttiness made it the best partner, coaxing out peat from the whisky.

Compass Box Circus

(98 proof, \$250) Compass Box, known for its blended malts, created a three-ring circus with this blend of malts and grains. The components were allowed to marry for several years before bottling. The use of Sherry casks for aging confers the character of dried fruits, especially pear. Caramel and flowers are followed by tingy spices, smoky toast and an orange finish. It balanced well with the Rocky Patel, its sweetness playing off the cigar's earthiness.

Dewar's 25

(80 proof, \$200) You may know Dewar's for its light and bright White Label, but the body is ramped up on its age-statement blends (12, 15, 18 and 25).



The senior citizen in the bunch was double-aged, using casks from the company's Royal Brackla distillery. It enjoys the signature Dewar's honey smoothness, with roses, toffee, berries and a toasty finish. The Rocky Patel gives it tanginess, while the cigar gets a sweet cocoa note.

The Famous Grouse Smoky Black

(80 proof, \$27) The popularity of peaty Islay malts has led to a spate of specialty blends with names like Big Peat, Big Smoke and Smokey Joe. Johnnie Walker has its Double Black and this is The Famous Grouse iteration (formerly called Black Grouse). The added peat has a toast-and-marmalade effect on the bread, honey and caramel of the standard Grouse. The Rocky Patel marriage represents the anomaly where smoke on smoke makes a wonderful combination, begetting leather.

Grant's Reserve Blend

(80 proof, \$18) Our budget choice delivers loads of complexity with a healthy dose of Speyside malts (Glenfiddich, Balvenie, Kininvie) that come from distillers owned by the parent company William Grant & Sons. Given the components, its mild body with vanilla, caramel, flowers, cereal and pear is expected. The surprise is the understated peat.

The Padrón Dámaso's smoothness burnished it, supplying almond and toast.

John Barr Reserve Blend

(80 proof, \$25) This brand, with an unremarkable recent history, was revitalized when Richard Paterson, the gifted nose behind The Dalmore Cigar Malt and Shackleton blended malt, reimagined it by adding a Sherry-cask finish. Now it crows with butterscotch, dried fruit, toast, olive oil, hard candy and a distinct maltiness. It sang harmony with the Rocky Patel, creating a subtle jam note and a bit of leather.

Johnnie Walker Blue Label Ghost and Rare Port Ellen

(87.6 proof, \$350) This is the second edition of the limited Ghost and Rare collection. Based on Johnnie Walker Blue, the expressions add malt left over from mothballed distilleries. In this case, the Ghost is Islay's Port Ellen (now a malting facility, it will reopen as a distillery soon). Slightly less smoky than the standard (if that is the appropriate term for such a blend) Blue, its toffee leather, vanilla, orange and hazelnut pop a bit. The leather soars with the Rocky and adds a salty, maritime note.

The Last Drop 1971

(94.4 proof, \$4,000) For 10 years industry veterans James Espey and Tom Jago have been sourcing almost vanished stocks of spirits (mostly Scotch) and bottling them in highly limited editions. This blend debuted at 1,352 bottles. In a rare triple maturation, components originally aged in Bourbon barrels for 12 years were blended and put into Sherry butts in 1983 for nine more years, then returned to Bourbon barrels for 24 years. The result is exquisite with spice, vanilla, butterscotch, sawdust, orange marmalade, figs and smoke. The figs add girth to the Padrón Dámaso, which repays it with mulled spices.

—JB




ASHTON[®]

Trust Your Taste

ashtoncigar.com

This year's top 10 watches deliver enhanced value and timeless styling—plus some over-the-top grail watches for good measure • *by Laurie Kahle*

TIME'S TOP TIER

With a double-digit increase in U.S. sales during the first half of 2018, the outlook for watches priced above \$1,000 is rosier than it has been for years.

This year's models continue the ongoing emphasis on retro-classic designs sourced in historical archives and an emphasis on value with the prolific use of stainless steel at more affordable prices. The influence of the dominant millennial market was also evidenced by designs that are clearly targeted to attract them with sporty styling and vintage flavor.

Of course, a handful of extreme complications with six-figure price tags from the usual contenders such as Greubel Forsey, A. Lange & Söhne, Richard Mille, and Patek Philippe still wow elite collectors and hardcore enthusiasts.

Ultrathin watches also made powerful strides this year with some record-breakers from Bulgari and Piaget that we will discuss in an upcoming issue.

From mind-boggling complications to no-nonsense timekeepers, here are our picks for the watches to keep an eye out for this fall.

Retro classic was a major theme this year. IWC dug deep into the past with the Tribute to Pallweber Edition 150 Years wristwatch, modeled on the maker's Pallweber pocket watch that dates to 1884.





Richard Mille



A. Lange & Söhne



Greubel Forsey

Richard Mille

RM 53-01 Tourbillon Pablo Mac Donough

Always one to deliver extreme performance (as well as pricing), Richard Mille once again turned to polo star Pablo Mac Donough for inspiration in creating the RM 53-01 Tourbillon Pablo Mac Donough. The piece was previewed with a video detailing the polo champion's many bone fractures and injuries, dispelling any notion that polo is a genteel sport.

Mille, who designs extravagant sport watches built for his elite athlete ambassadors to wear in competition, introduced the first Mac Donough polo watch in 2012. Ready for hard knocks, it resembled a Civil War-era submarine with a hefty metal case revealing the time in a porthole. By contrast, this year's 53-01 was built to show off the intricate tourbillon movement for all to see.

A tourbillon is a delicate mechanism, so building one that can withstand the rigors of a six-chukka match was a daunting challenge. The solution was to suspend the movement with tiny braided steel cables that allow the watch to take shocks of up to 5,000 g. The mechanism is housed in a tough Carbon TPT case, which is notched for heightened durability.

To reinforce the sapphire crystal over the dial, Mille turned to a favorite source, the automotive world. The patented result is two pieces of sapphire glass separated by a thin sheet of polyvinyl film that holds the glass together like automotive safety glass even if it were to be shattered by a mallet strike. The \$900,000 watch is limited to 30 pieces. richardmille.com

A. Lange & Söhne Triple Split

Germany's A. Lange & Söhne took the split-seconds, or *rattrapante*, chronograph to an unprecedented level of complexity with the Triple Split (\$147,000), the first of its kind to track comparative times as long as 12 hours.

A simple chronograph functions as a stopwatch, whereas the *rattrapante* features two aligned timing hands that start

simultaneously and can be stopped separately allowing you to time two separate concurrent events. In 2004, Lange's Double Split featured a groundbreaking dual *rattrapante* function, allowing it to track aggregate times of up to 30 minutes, a considerable increase over the standard 60 seconds. Limited to 100 pieces, the Triple Split ups that by a factor of 24 with three pairs of blued-steel *rattrapante* hands for seconds, minutes and hours. This ultimate split-seconds chronograph also features a fly-back function that allows timing to be reset and restarted with a single push of a button.

The new *manufacture* calibre L132.1 movement is a technical triumph consisting of 567 components. A sapphire crystal case back invites you to admire the intricate, beautifully finished, multilayered architecture and contemplate this staggering feat of micro-engineering. alange-soehne.com/en/

Greubel Forsey Différentiel d'Égalité

Robert Greubel and Stephen Forsey take their time when developing and perfecting their horological masterpieces. This year's unveiling of Greubel Forsey's fifth invention, the Différentiel d'Égalité (about \$268,000) enjoyed a decade of R&D since the watchmakers presented the original concept in 2008.

In the pursuit of timekeeping perfection, the mechanical tour de force uses a spherical differential to ensure a steady and consistent transmission of power from the mainspring barrel to the regulating organ. Because the same amount of energy is released to the escapement each second, constant amplitude is maintained throughout the entire 60-hour power reserve. Typical mechanical watches lose precision as the energy in the movement winds down. The constant transfer of energy is regulated by a secondary spring on the differential that rewinds itself every second. This feature allowed the boutique brand to introduce its first jumping, or dead-beat, seconds on a sub-dial at 4 o'clock with a hand that moves in precise increments akin to a quartz watch, rather than the usual sweeping seconds hand.



Patek Philippe



Rolex



Baume & Mercier

Performance is further heightened with the brand's 30° inclined balance wheel, which counteracts the impact of gravity when the movement runs in different positions. When you pull out the crown, the balance wheel stops and the seconds hand resets to zero to set the time with precision. The Différentiel d'Égalité is limited to 33 pieces in white gold. greubelforsey.com

Patek Philippe Aquanaut Ref. 5968A

While we have come to expect such sublime complications as the Ref. 5531R World Time Minute Repeater from Patek Philippe, the Geneva institution also showed off a lighter side this year with the sporty Aquanaut Ref. 5968A chronograph (\$43,770) designed with—gasp—orange accents and an alternate rubber strap also in orange. While such a vibrant flourish elsewhere would not bat an eyelash, at the usually reserved Patek Philippe, some eyebrows were undoubtedly raised.

The Ref. 5968A marks the first chronograph in the Aquanaut range, which makes a clear appeal to a younger client, albeit one with a healthy bank account. It is equipped with Patek's CH 28-520 C caliber, a self-winding flyback chronograph with column-wheel construction and a vertical disc clutch for smooth and precise operation. In other Patek news this year, Aquanaut's big brother, the hard-to-get Nautilus introduced its first perpetual calendar, unconventionally merging a sport watch with a high complication. But the Aquanaut best represents the brand's evolution with a nod to millennials, complete with an Instagram story. patek.com

Rolex Oyster Perpetual GMT-Master II

Rolex's star launch this year is the Oyster Perpetual GMT-Master II, with a new in-house movement, the caliber 3285 with a 70-hour power reserve and chronometer precision of -2/+2 seconds per day, plus the GMT function to display local and home time for globetrotters. The 40-mm, Oystersteel version (\$9,250) is fitted with a 24-hour bidirectional "Pepsi" bezel in

graduated red and blue Cerachrom, a proprietary ceramic. Since 2014, the Pepsi bezel had been limited to the white-gold GMT II.

Another update is the five-link Jubilee bracelet, marking the first time Rolex has combined that bracelet, an Oystersteel case, and the Pepsi bezel, causing Rolex collectors to salivate. The watch is also available in two-tone steel with Everose gold (\$14,050), and solid 18-karat Everose gold (\$36,750) for the first time. Those models are appointed with a complementary brown-and-black Cerachrom bezel. For those with shallower pockets, Rolex's sister brand Tudor launched a steel Pepsi-bezel Black Bay GMT (\$4,210) at less than half the price. rolex.com

Baume & Mercier Baumatic collection

Baume & Mercier made news this year with the launch of its first proprietary automatic movement in the new Baumatic collection (from \$2,590). The caliber was developed with parent company Richemont's ValFleurier, which produces movements for sister brands Montblanc and Panerai, in collaboration with the Richemont Research & Innovation team. Baumatic is endowed with cutting-edge technology, such as a silicon hairspring and escapement for extreme antimagnetic resistance of up to 1,500 gauss and an extended recommended maintenance interval of five years. The movement delivers a five-day power reserve and COSC chronometer certification with precision of -4/+6 seconds per day. It will have the exclusive use of this high-performance movement for the foreseeable future. baume-et-mercier.com

Carl F. Bucherer

Manero Tourbillon Double Peripheral

Carl F. Bucherer combined its proprietary peripheral winding system with a peripherally mounted flying tourbillon at 12 o'clock in the Manero Tourbillon Double Peripheral (\$72,300). The CFB T3000 automatic movement was developed in house with a silicon escapement that reduces friction and requires no lubrication. The



Carl F. Bucherer



Vacheron Constantin



Laurent Ferrier

striking tourbillon appears to float at the top of the dial. Rather than mounting the tourbillon to the main plate or an overlying bridge, the tourbillon cage is supported on the periphery with ceramic ball bearings. The movement, which required years of development, also features a stop-seconds function that allows you to stop and start the rotating tourbillon cage. The highly accurate COSC-certified chronometer movement is housed in a robust 43.1-mm rose-gold case with a silver-colored dial appointed with rose-gold plated indices, making a classically pure design statement that puts all the focus on the star attraction, the spinning tourbillon. carl-f-bucherer.com

Vacheron Constantin *FiftySix collection*

Vacheron Constantin lowered the bar of entry to one of watchmaking's Holy Trinity (Vacheron, Patek Philippe, and Audemars Piguet), with the FiftySix collection directly aimed at affluent millennials. With a retro sector-dial design inspired by 1956's ref. 6073, the collection opens with a steel automatic watch powered by a movement developed by Richemont Group and assembled and finished by Vacheron. At \$11,900, it is the most affordable Vacheron available in the current collection. The rose-gold version goes for \$19,900. For those with complicated tastes, there is the Day Date model (\$17,900 in steel; \$33,400 in pink gold) and the Complete Calendar (\$23,500 in steel; \$36,800 in pink gold) powered by in-house Vacheron movements that are awarded the prestigious Geneva Seal. Rumor has it that even more complicated FiftySix models are in the pipeline this fall. vacheron-constantin.com

IWC *Jubilee collection*

IWC Schaffhausen marked its 150th anniversary this year with a Jubilee collection of 28 limited-edition Portugieser, Portofino, Pilot's Watch and Da Vinci models. Also debuted was a series of Tribute to Pallweber Edition 150 Years wristwatches, modeled on its historic Pallweber pocket watch, which dates to 1884. The display shows jumping hours and minutes through apertures using a digital format via rotating discs. The glossy white and

blue lacquer dials recall the original Pallweber's enamel dial. Twenty-five watches are in platinum (\$57,800), 250 in red gold (\$36,600), and 500 in stainless steel (\$23,100).

For purists, IWC also introduced a 50-piece, limited-edition pocket watch in red gold (\$66,500). The Tribute to Pallweber Edition 150 Years pocket watch is the first digital pocket watch IWC has produced since 1890, when it phased out the Pallweber, and the brand's first 21st-century pocket watch. iwc.com

Laurent Ferrier *Galet Annual Calendar École Piece*

Independent watchmaker Laurent Ferrier has always impressed with its elegant timepieces with superlative finishing. With the Galet Annual Calendar École Piece, the brand launches its fifth in-house movement with a practical annual calendar function that is designed for smooth and easy adjustment. Just turn the crown forward and backward to set the date and month and use the push button at 10 O'CLOCK to set the day of the week.

An annual calendar automatically accounts for months of varying lengths, so it requires adjustment only once per year on March 1. The Galet Annual Calendar's retro dial evokes 1940s-era triple-calendar flair and the indicators are designed for instant legibility with the date displayed by a central hand and the day of the week and month in apertures. The manual-winding movement delivers a power reserve of 80 hours, with the power reserve indicator on the movement side.

On the dial, vintage-style numerals are painted in blue, while the date hand pops in burgundy or red. The watch is available in steel (\$58,000), red gold (\$63,000) and a new pale yellow gold (\$63,000), with silver-toned or anthracite gray dials decorated with a vertical satin brush finish in the centers, encircled by a contrasting circular satin brush finish. The result is a refined design married with a practical function. laurentferrier.ch ❖

Laurie Kahle is a contributing editor for CIGAR AFICIONADO.

4

Consecutive Years in
Cigar Aficionado's top 25

91

Timeless Prestige Churchill
(Formerly Timeless Dominican)

92

Timeless Supreme 652T
(Formerly Timeless Nicaragua)

93

Timeless Prestige No.2
(Formerly Timeless Dominican)

93

Timeless Prestige Divinos
(Formerly Timeless Dominican)

"A handsomely box-pressed torpedo offering a rich range of molasses, oak and semisweet chocolate."
Cigar Aficionado - 652T

"A sign of newfound energy and commitment Nat Sherman has made to its cigar brand."
Cigar Aficionado - No.2

THE TIMELESS COLLECTION. ACCOLADES TO BE CONTINUED...

EXCLUSIVELY FOR
Nat Sherman Intl.



1.800.MY.CIGAR

WARNING: Smoking cigars regularly poses risks of cancer of the mouth, throat, larynx, and esophagus similar to smoking cigarettes.

©2018 NAT SHERMAN INTERNATIONAL, LLC NSI242

EXPERTLY ROLLED AND STORED UNDER LOCK AND KEY



A • L • R

AGED, LIMITED & RARE

2018 SMALL BATCH RELEASE

FROM OUR AGING ROOMS TO YOUR HUMIDOR



cigars

120 CIGAR REVIEW

From classic Cubans to new Nicaraguans—and everything in between—our tasting of 83 cigars turned up some spectacular smokes.

134 THE NEW BUYING GUIDE

Are you looking for the strongest cigars of the issue? The best bargains? Maybe you just want to go straight to the top scores. Our entire tasting section is now broken down and categorized for your convenience.

136 CONNOISSEUR'S CORNER

We revisit our first-ever Cigar of the Year: the Padrón 1926 40th Anniversary from 2004. Fourteen years later, it's traded power for elegance.

139 THE COMEDIC SPORTSCASTER

While sports talk can quickly turn contentious, Rich Eisen has been keeping it light and funny for more than two decades. No surprise, he enjoys a good smoke.

143 A CONVERSATION WITH HEINRICH VILLIGER

“Mr. Villiger’s” wide reach includes premium cigars, machine-made cigars into the billions and the sole rights to distribute Cubans for five European nations. We sit down with him for an enlightening Q&A.

149 CUBA REPORT: CIGAR SOMMELIERS

Every year in Havana there’s a contest to decide who’s best at pairing cigars and drinks. Senior contributing editor Gordon Mott takes us into the competition.

JEFF HARRIS

churchills

This tasting of Churchills turned up five outstanding examples of the classic size, three of which scored 92 points. The non-Cuban Ramon Allones brand is now in the hands of cigarmaker A.J. Fernandez. He makes and distributes the brand, although the trademark still belongs to General Cigar. It debuted this year. The Rocky Patel Vintage 1992 has been around for 16 years. As exciting as new releases can be, it would be a mistake to overlook this Honduran cigar. Not quite as old, the Villiger San'Doro Colorado is made in Nicaragua and represents Villiger's commitment to making fine handmade cigars. The new Diesel Whiskey Row and bargain-priced Oliva Serie G scored 91 points.



NICARAGUA
RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

RAMON ALLONES BY AJ FERNANDEZ CHURCHILL
Each puff of this toothy cigar leaves big notes of semi-sweet chocolate, leather and cherry on the palate before a sweet finish that shows more of the same.
U.S.: \$14.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Full

92



HONDURAS
RING GAUGE: 48 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, DOM. REP.
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

ROCKY PATEL VINTAGE 1992 CHURCHILL
Dark and squarely pressed, this Churchill imparts a dense, creamy smoke that's bright and cedary with plenty of almond and orange peel notes. The finish smacks of baking spices.
U.S.: \$10.10 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

92



NICARAGUA
RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

VILLIGER SAN'DORO COLORADO CHURCHILL
A dark and attractive Churchill with rich notes of nuts and leather enlivened by black pepper spiciness and a sweet, malted-chocolate finish.
U.S.: \$9.56 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

92



NICARAGUA
RING GAUGE: 49 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: MEXICO
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

DIESEL WHISKEY ROW CHURCHILL
The earthy, chocolate notes of this cigar frame a hearty core of wood and cedar, all combining for a finish of bread and brown sugar.
U.S.: \$8.49 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Full

91



NICARAGUA
RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: CAMEROON

OLIVA SERIE G CHURCHILL
Distinct notes of chocolate ganache and dark toast bring complexity to this sweet and earthy cigar. It's a trunk-pressed Churchill cloaked in a colorado claro wrapper.
U.S.: \$6.25 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

91



NICARAGUA
RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. BROADLEAF

LA AROMA DE CUBA CHURCHILL
Beautiful to behold with a dark, attractive wrapper. There's a touch of resistance to the draw, which imparts notes of leather, almonds and tangy wood. Lemon and cedar emerge on the finish.
U.S.: \$6.70 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

89

	NICARAGUA RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 7" FILLER: NICARAGUA BINDER: NICARAGUA WRAPPER: NICARAGUA	MY FATHER LE BIJOU 1922 CHURCHILL A hearty smoke full of oaky vanilla notes that are enriched by sweeter hints of black cherry and chocolate before a boozy, rum-like finish. U.S.: \$11.90 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Full	89
	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC RING GAUGE: 48 LENGTH: 6 3/4" FILLER: DOM. REP., NICARAGUA, PERU BINDER: NICARAGUA WRAPPER: CAMEROON	H. UPMANN THE BANKER INGOT ROSÉ CHURCHILL Draped in a coarse, rustic cover leaf, this Churchill has a tight draw that imparts elements of cedar and earth. Hints of citrus and nougat also come through. U.S.: \$12.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium	88
	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 7" FILLER: DOM. REP. BINDER: DOM. REP. WRAPPER: DOM. REP.	LA AURORA 100 AÑOS CHURCHILL Enveloped in a veiny wrapper that's slightly darker than medio claro. It's a nutty smoke, showing notes of walnut and hazelnut with a touch of honey, but the charry finish offset the score. U.S.: \$14.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full	88
	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 7" FILLER: DOM. REP. BINDER: DOM. REP. WRAPPER: NICARAGUA	LA FLOR DOMINICANA CORONADO DOUBLE CORONA Richly hued and gleaming with oil, this attractive cigar draws well but combustion is a bit uneven. It's a sweet and spicy cigar showing red and black pepper notes alongside sweet vanilla and brown sugar. U.S.: \$9.30 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full	88
	HONDURAS RING GAUGE: 48 LENGTH: 7" FILLER: DOM. REP., HONDURAS BINDER: HONDURAS WRAPPER: ECUADOR	BLIND MAN'S BLUFF CONNECTICUT CHURCHILL Yellowish in appearance, this Churchill draws well, forming a solid ash. It's a light smoke, showing herbal qualities, straw notes and vague nuttiness. U.S.: \$9.90 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Mild-Medium	87
	NICARAGUA RING GAUGE: 48 LENGTH: 6 7/8" FILLER: NICARAGUA BINDER: NICARAGUA WRAPPER: NICARAGUA	JOYA DE NICARAGUA ANTAÑO 1970 CHURCHILL An herbal, cedary smoke with muted notes of citrus, cocoa and saffron that emerge and then disappear. The finish is a bit muddled. U.S.: \$8.30 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Full	87
	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 7" FILLER: NICARAGUA, DOM. REP. BINDER: DOM. REP. WRAPPER: CAMEROON	KRISTOFF CAMEROON CHURCHILL This dark Churchill is rolled with a coiled pigtail cap and uncut foot. It's woody and earthy with damp hints of mustiness and traces of sweetness. Tasters noted inconsistencies in the draw. U.S.: \$9.80 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium	86
	NICARAGUA RING GAUGE: 49 LENGTH: 6 7/8" FILLER: NICARAGUA BINDER: NICARAGUA WRAPPER: NICARAGUA	CASA MAGNA COLORADO CHURCHILL Wrapped in a coarse cover leaf, this Churchill has a firm draw. It's earthy and oaky with a hint of hickory, a touch of sweetness and a bitter, oily finish. U.S.: \$8.44 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full	85

corona gordas

More than half of the corona gordas we tasted scored 90 points or higher—so many that the 90s have spilled over onto the next page. Two cigars had especially impressive scores of 93 points. The E.P. Carrillo Encore is the newest brand from Ernesto Perez-Carrillo. While this smoke is made in the Dominican Republic, it contains only Nicaraguan leaves, and it's Perez-Carrillo's first Nicaraguan puro. What started as a Cuban Edición Limitada is now a delicious staple in Habanos S.A.'s regular-production portfolio: The Hoyo de Monterrey Epicure Especial. It's one of the thicker cigars in the Epicure Series. Corona gordas, also known as toros, are among the cigar industry's most popular shapes.



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 5 3/8"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

E.P. CARRILLO ENCORE MAJESTIC

Elegant impressions of English breakfast tea, orange peel and sweet caramel are balanced by a hearty, woody backbone of oak.
U.S.: \$11.50 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

93



CUBA

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 5 1/2"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: NOVEMBER 2017

HOYO DE MONTERREY EPICURE ESPECIAL

Smoking this cigar is like chewing on a luxurious caramel, as its sweetness is profoundly dense and elegant. Notes of coffee bean and chocolate-covered almonds add to its richness.
U.S.: N/A U.K.: £27.80 STRENGTH: Medium

93



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA, HONDURAS
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

ALEC BRADLEY BLACK MARKET ESTELÍ TORO

The smoke from this well-made cigar layers the palate with notes of caramel and cocoa balanced by a ripe and concentrated, dried-fruit sweetness.
U.S.: \$8.50 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Full

92



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 46 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

MOMBACHO LIGA MAESTRO HERMOSO

An opulent smoke that captures the richness of maple, toffee and leather with every puff. Bold notes of black pepper and cedar fortify the cigar for strength and resonance.
U.S.: \$9.95 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

92



CUBA

RING GAUGE: 55 LENGTH: 6 1/2"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: FEBRUARY 2018

MONTECRISTO LÍNEA 1935 LEYENDA

A richly hued cigar made with a three-seam cap. Bold notes of oak and baking spices usher in sweeter, precise hints of honey and candied apple.
U.S.: N/A U.K.: £39.30 STRENGTH: Medium-Full

91



HONDURAS

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 5 3/4"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, HONDURAS
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: HONDURAS

PLASENCIA COSECHA 146 SAN LUIS

Well made with an even burn, this cigar delivers woody notes of oak and fresh tobacco interspersed with red pepper spice. The finish shows some vanilla sweetness.
U.S.: \$13.50 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

91

	NICARAGUA RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 6" FILLER: NICARAGUA BINDER: NICARAGUA WRAPPER: ECUADOR	ROCKY PATEL 15TH ANNIVERSARY TORO (TUBO) Rich and nutty in character, this dark toro also delivers plenty of dark chocolate and oaky vanilla notes that lead to a long, tasty finish redolent of cashews and peanuts. U.S.: \$12.40 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full	91
	NICARAGUA RING GAUGE: 56 LENGTH: 6 1/2" FILLER: NICARAGUA BINDER: NICARAGUA WRAPPER: ECUADOR	L'ATELIER LAT56 This large, thick cigar is topped with a pigtail and three-seam cap. Initial puffs are nutty and floral before the smoke picks up some earthy notes and a sweet, hickory finish. U.S.: \$10.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium	90
	HONDURAS RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 5 1/2" FILLER: NICARAGUA BINDER: NICARAGUA WRAPPER: NICARAGUA	VIAJE EXCLUSIVO DOUBLE R Solid to the touch, this toro is packed with tobacco but draws and burns evenly. Up-front earthiness fades to the background for notes of oak, chocolate and baking spices. U.S.: \$9.04 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full	90
	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 6" FILLER: NICARAGUA BINDER: ECUADOR WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. BROADLEAF	E.P. CARRILLO CARDINAL IMPACT MADURO NO. 54 This dark, box-pressed cigar is covered in a splotchy, rustic wrapper. Its nutty and citrus qualities are joined by sweet notes of raisin and cocoa. U.S.: \$8.70 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full	89
	NICARAGUA RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 6" FILLER: NICARAGUA BINDER: NICARAGUA WRAPPER: MEXICO	HVC CERRO MADURO TORO This dark toro has a bit of a tight draw, but shows strong notes of earth and coffee against a palate of licorice and dark toast, though the finish is gummy. U.S.: \$8.80 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full	89
	NICARAGUA RING GAUGE: 46 LENGTH: 5 3/4" FILLER: NICARAGUA BINDER: CAMEROON WRAPPER: ECUADOR	CROMAGNON AQUITAINE ANTHROPOLOGY Soft spots on the cigar result in an airy draw and blistering burn. Notes of earth and vanilla take on an herbal quality, all leading to a sticky, molasses finish. U.S.: \$8.65 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Full	88
	HONDURAS RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 6" FILLER: HONDURAS, NICARAGUA BINDER: HONDURAS WRAPPER: MEXICO	THE OSCAR MADURO TORO A brownish cigar with a coarse wrapper. Muted notes of licorice and nuts are vague and diluted, as are the tobacco's floral and toasty elements. Some of the flavors seem closed. U.S.: \$11.50 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full	86
	NICARAGUA RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 6 1/2" FILLER: DOM. REP., U.S.A./PENN. BROADLEAF, NICARAGUA BINDER: NICARAGUA WRAPPER: ECUADOR	GURKHA HERITAGE TORO Dark and hefty, this cigar has an open, airy draw that delivers a woody, earthy smoke that leaves a slightly bitter, oily aftertaste. U.S.: \$9.36 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full	85

GREAT PLACES



SHELLY'S BACK ROOM | WASHINGTON, D.C.

A distinguished assortment of fine cigars and whiskeys, a state-of-the-art continuous fresh-air system, eight HD TVs, complimentary Wi-Fi, a seasonal outdoor café, and lunch, dinner and late-night menus make Shelly's a D.C. legend! Located two blocks from the White House.

shellysbackroom.com



CASA DE MONTECRISTO | MULTIPLE LOCATIONS

Redefine the premium cigar-smoking experience at a Casa de Montecristo near you! Discover today's finest premium cigar selections as you unwind in a relaxing and contemporary smoking environment. With over 20 locations across the U.S., it's easy for every smoker to come and enjoy a cigar at Casa!

casademontecristo.com



DAVIDOFF OF GENEVA | MULTIPLE LOCATIONS

Discover rare and exclusive cigars in our bespoke vault. Personalize cigar boxes and accessories, or relax in our luxurious lounges. Davidoff of Geneva since 1911 is your passport to a cigar world above the ordinary. This is quality time, elevated.

Atlanta • Houston • New York • Las Vegas • Tampa

davidoffgeneva.com



OLD VIRGINIA TOBACCO CO. | NORTHERN VA

Relax and enjoy comfortable seating, friendly atmosphere and big screen TVs with the largest premium cigar selection. With seven locations in Northern Virginia, all just minutes from Washington, D.C.

Come join us for a smoke! 1-800-999-OVTC

ovtc.com

**VISIT GREATPLACESTOLIGHTUP.CIGARAFICIONADO.COM
FOR MORE INFORMATION AND EXCLUSIVE OFFERS**

TO LIGHT UP



BLEND BAR | MULTIPLE LOCATIONS

Blend Bar with Davidoff Cigars has four locations: Indianapolis, Nashville, Pittsburgh and Houston, Each one offering over 100 bourbons and single malts in a luxury environment. Open daily starting at noon. Luxury Redefined.

blendbarcigar.com



CORONA CIGAR | ORLANDO, FL

Millions of cigars, hundreds of whiskeys and one-of-a-kind experiences! Enjoy three Orlando locations offering exclusive cigars, authentic Florida Sun Grown tobacco and private barrel whiskeys.

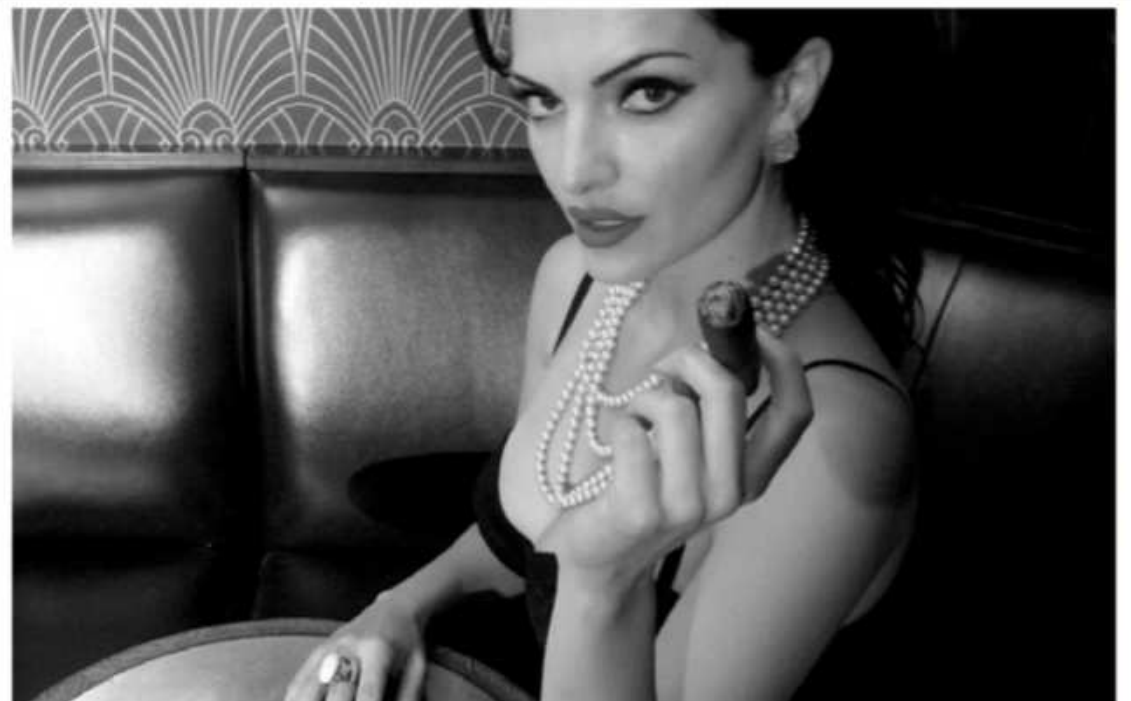
coronacigar.com



MONTECRISTO LOUNGE AT CAESARS | LAS VEGAS, NV

Grab a glass, strike a match and don't miss a game this football season! The 4,000-square-foot venue provides the ultimate experience allowing guests to hand-pick premium cigars from one of the largest humidors on the strip and sip on the finest whiskeys from our Signature Bar.

caesarspalace.com



SOHO CIGAR BAR | MANHATTAN, NY

Eat. Drink. Smoke . . . Indoors! Relax and enjoy flights and pairings from our curated selection of 150 world-class whiskeys and premium cigars. Then indulge yourself with any of our artisanal crafted appetizers. Your table awaits.

sohocigarbar.com

**TO ADVERTISE CONTACT: BARRY ABRAMS
212-684-4896 • BABRAMS@MSHANKEN.COM**

figurados

Sometimes it pays to tread the familiar. The Montecristo No. 2 scored 92 points, and is one of the most recognizable cigars in the world of handmade smokes. It has also become a classic go-to for fans of not only Cuban cigars, but cigars in general. Every enthusiast should try a Monte 2 at least once—especially now. This particular sample came from a box dated December 2017. The La Flor Dominicana Air Bender Chisel scored 90 points and is named for its unique, chisel-shaped head. The unorthodox Chisel made its first appearance as part of La Flor’s Double Ligero line, but brand owner Litto Gomez thought it would be a good idea to make one in the Air Bender series as well.



CUBA

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 6 1/8"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: DECEMBER 2017

MONTECRISTO NO. 2

The complex smoke of this torpedo offers an elegant interplay of almond and orange peel notes that frame a leathery, woody core.

U.S.: N/A U.K.: £27.00 STRENGTH: Medium

92



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 6 1/2"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

LA FLOR DOMINICANA AIR BENDER CHISEL

Shaped like a chisel, this dark cigar gleams with oil. While there’s some resistance to the draw, it imparts a spicy, leathery and earthy smoke sweetened by hints of raisin and marshmallow.

U.S.: \$9.70 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Full

90



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 44 LENGTH: 6 3/4"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. BROADLEAF

ARTURO FUENTE AÑEJO RESERVA NO. 888

A long, slim cigar with a pointy, pre-cut head. It comes on strong with bold notes of wood and leather before showing a vanilla sweetness, black pepper and a touch of honey. A notably firm draw affected the score.

U.S.: \$12.20 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

89



CUBA

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 5 1/2"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: JUNE 2017

SANCHO PANZA BELICOSO

A chunky belicoso with a slightly uneven burn. The creamy smoke is sweet and woody showing light notes of orange peel, cinnamon and cashews.

U.S.: N/A U.K.: £21.30 STRENGTH: Medium

89



HONDURAS

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: HONDURAS
BINDER: HONDURAS
WRAPPER: HONDURAS

CAMACHO LIBERTY 2005 THROWBACK 11/18

Bulging in the middle, this double-tapered figurado is strong and spicy, showing big notes of smoked meat before a toasty finish. The draw is lush and even.

U.S.: \$22.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Full

88



U.S.A.

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 6 1/4"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

**CASA FERNANDEZ
AGANORSA LEAF TORPEDO**

A predominantly woody, spicy cigar with hints of minerals and a bit of vanilla bean sweetness. Box-pressed and nicely colored, this torpedo draws and burns evenly.

U.S.: \$8.40 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

88

	NICARAGUA RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 6 1/2" FILLER: NICARAGUA, U.S.A./FLORIDA BINDER: HONDURAS WRAPPER: BRAZIL	FLORIDA SUN GROWN BELICOSO An oily figurado that produces a brilliant white ash. Its nutty, wheaty smoke is complemented by hints of herbs and spice, but the finish is a bit dry. U.S.: \$13.60 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full	88
	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC RING GAUGE: 57 LENGTH: 6 1/8" FILLER: DOM. REP. BINDER: DOM. REP. WRAPPER: DOM. REP.	AGING ROOM SOLERA COROJO FANFARE Topped with a lumpy belicoso head, this cigar shows an earthy palate of coffee bean and spices with bitter woody notes and slight sweetness. U.S.: \$8.75 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full	87
	HONDURAS RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 6 1/4" FILLER: HONDURAS, PERU, NICARAGUA BINDER: HONDURAS WRAPPER: HONDURAS	CLE HABANO 11/18 A curvy cigar that bulges in the middle and tapers at the end. It smokes evenly, offering a tangy, cedary smoke with floral elements and oaky notes of white wine. The finish is herbal. U.S.: \$8.16 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full	87
	HONDURAS RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 6 1/4" FILLER: NICARAGUA BINDER: HONDURAS WRAPPER: MEXICO	PADILLA VINTAGE RESERVE FIGURADO Tangy and cedary, this big, dark figurado takes on a marshmallow sweetness before the faint cedar finish. The cigar smokes evenly, producing a flaky ash. U.S.: \$10.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium	87
	NICARAGUA RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 6" FILLER: NICARAGUA BINDER: NICARAGUA WRAPPER: ECUADOR	PADRÓN DÁMASO NO. 34 The draw and burn of this cigar are even and consistent. It offers a creamy smoke with dry notes of straw and hay, hints of honey and a light, woody finish. U.S.: \$14.50 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Mild-Medium	87
	NICARAGUA RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 6" FILLER: HONDURAS/ NICARAGUA BINDER: BRAZIL WRAPPER: MEXICO	UNDERCROWN BELICOSO Initial notes of earth and tropical fruits clash, but the cigar becomes more cohesive showing a balanced mix of cocoa and vanilla bean. The finish is dry and woody. U.S.: \$8.80 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full	87
	NICARAGUA RING GAUGE: 46 LENGTH: 6" FILLER: NICARAGUA BINDER: NICARAGUA WRAPPER: NICARAGUA	LAST CALL MADURO BY AJ FERNANDEZ FLAQUITAS Nearly black in appearance with an uncut foot. Bright and cedary, this cigar takes on a warm, sweet note of oatmeal cookie with hints of raisin and cinnamon, but the finish becomes musty and earthy. U.S.: \$6.80 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full	86
	NICARAGUA RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 6 1/2" FILLER: NICARAGUA BINDER: NICARAGUA WRAPPER: MEXICO	REGIUS EXCLUSIVO U.S.A. OSCURO ESPECIAL PRESSED PERFECTO The draw of this box-pressed figurado is notably firm. It imparts an herbal, wheaty smoke that becomes earthy with a hint of malty sweetness, but the draw never fully opens. U.S.: \$13.60 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full	86

lonsdales

The once popular lonsdale size still struggles to find a large audience, but fans of tradition continue to smoke them, and why not? Even though it's a niche size there are still plenty of great lonsdales produced today, and the tasting results prove it. Almost half of the lonsdales here scored at least 90 points. The most exceptional example came from Cuba in the form of a Cohiba Siglo V Tubo, which achieved 92 points. These samples came from those sturdy three-packs that Habanos produces in case you don't want to carry around loose sticks. At 91 points, the Rocky Patel Decade Lonsdale is part of a line released in 2007 to celebrate Rocky Patel's 10 years in the cigar business.



CUBA

RING GAUGE: 43 LENGTH: 6 3/4"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: DECEMBER 2017

COHIBA SIGLO V (TUBO)

Though the draw is a bit firm, this dark lonsdale imparts delicious notes of leather and chocolate-covered almonds balanced by hints of dried fruit and a sweet mocha finish.
U.S.: N/A U.K.: £40.30 STRENGTH: Medium

92



HONDURAS

RING GAUGE: 44 LENGTH: 6 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

ROCKY PATEL DECADE LONSDALE

Voluminous amounts of smoke pour out of this slim cigar with each puff. It's an earthy, herbal smoke showing notes of sage, anise and coffee bean before a finish that tastes distinctly like buttered toast.
U.S.: \$10.55 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

91



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 44 LENGTH: 6 1/2"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. SHADE

ASHTON 8-9-8

The leather and citrus notes of this lonsdale become nutty before transitioning to a sweet nougat and marzipan finish.
U.S.: \$9.75 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Mild

90



CUBA

RING GAUGE: 42 LENGTH: 6 1/2"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: OCTOBER 2017

MONTECRISTO NO. 1

A slim smoke with a tan wrapper and slightly firm draw. Notes of sweet tea and honey become cedary and tangy with nutty touches of pecan and a slightly salty finish.
U.S.: N/A U.K.: £21.80 STRENGTH: Medium

90



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 44 LENGTH: 6 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

MY FATHER CEDROS DELUXE CERVANTES

The lush draw of this toothy lonsdale, delivers a woody, spicy smoke supported by a foundation of leather and a rich nuttiness.
U.S.: \$8.90 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

90



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 43 LENGTH: 6 3/4"
FILLER: DOM. REP., MEXICO
BINDER: MEXICO
WRAPPER: CAMEROON

PARTAGAS NO. 1

A slender cigar topped with a round head. It draws and burns evenly, exhibiting a solid core of oak and leather with tangy notes of citrus and hints of black pepper. The finish is flinty.
U.S.: \$8.79 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

90

	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC RING GAUGE: 44 LENGTH: 6 5/8" FILLER: DOM. REP., NICARAGUA BINDER: DOM. REP. WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. SHADE	DON DIEGO LONSDALE Golden-brown in color, this lonsdale imparts a toasty smoke with hints of peach tea, saffron and a tangy touch of lemon meringue. U.S.: \$5.18 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Mild-Medium	89
	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC RING GAUGE: 44 LENGTH: 6 1/2" FILLER: DOM. REP. BINDER: DOM. REP. WRAPPER: INDONESIA	ROMEO Y JULIETA 1875 CEDRO DELUXE NO. 1 The large pores of this grayish cigar give it a rustic appearance. It's a tangy smoke full of citrus and lemon peel notes, a touch of acidity and a bit of sweetness. U.S.: \$7.38 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Mild-Medium	89
	U.S.A. RING GAUGE: 43 LENGTH: 6 3/8" FILLER: NICARAGUA BINDER: NICARAGUA WRAPPER: ECUADOR	TATUAJE CABINET HAVANA CAZADORES Long and thin with an oily wrapper and perfect draw. Its dense creamy smoke is full of leather, black pepper and a bit of char. Hints of mustard seed appear on the finish. U.S.: \$11.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium	89
	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC RING GAUGE: 44 LENGTH: 6 3/4" FILLER: DOM. REP. BINDER: DOM. REP. WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. BROADLEAF	ARTURO FUENTE SELECCION PRIVADA NO. 1 MADURO Near black and softly pressed with glue spots and a scaly cap. Muted hints of licorice and hazelnut become more pronounced before the herbal, woody finish. U.S.: \$6.57 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium	88
	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC RING GAUGE: 44 LENGTH: 6 1/2" FILLER: NICARAGUA BINDER: NICARAGUA WRAPPER: ECUADOR	FOUR KICKS SELECCIÓN NO. 5 Topped with a four-seam cap, this dark lonsdale starts sweet with notes of molasses, coconut and maple, but the smoke is gritty in texture and leaves a slightly chemical aftertaste. U.S.: \$8.70 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium	88
	NICARAGUA RING GAUGE: 42 LENGTH: 6 1/2" FILLER: NICARAGUA BINDER: NICARAGUA WRAPPER: NICARAGUA	PADRÓN 1964 ANNIVERSARY SERIES SUPERIOR Light and papery at first, this box-pressed lonsdale becomes a bit weightier with notes of cedar and almond. The draw and burn are even throughout. U.S.: \$11.30 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium	88
	HONDURAS RING GAUGE: 45 LENGTH: 6 1/4" FILLER: HONDURAS, NICARAGUA, DOM. REP. BINDER: U.S.A./CONN. BROADLEAF WRAPPER: ECUADOR	PUNCH PUNCH EMS The initial mintiness of this cigar dissipates to usher in notes of earth, coffee bean and a yeasty touch of bread. The finish is muddled. U.S.: \$5.99 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full	88
	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC RING GAUGE: 44 LENGTH: 6 1/4" FILLER: DOM. REP. BINDER: DOM. REP. WRAPPER: ECUADOR	THE GRIFFIN'S NO. 300 A bright, cedary cigar covered in a claro wrapper. Floral notes and hints of earth and toffee also come through, with a touch of mustiness. U.S.: \$10.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Mild	88

miscellaneous

Short, fat and stubby cigars tend to make up the miscellaneous category, but unusually long lanceros, twisted-up culebras and other oddities are just as welcome. The Illusione Cruzado Short Robusto from Nicaragua is the top smoke in this line-up of cigar misfits, as it scored 92 points. For a small cigar, it's full of spice and sweetness, making it the perfect size when time is limited. Five cigars from various countries scored 90 points: two Cubans (Cohiba Medio Siglo, Romeo y Julieta Petit Churchill); two Dominicans (Ashton Virgin Sun Grown Trés Mystique, Nat Sherman Timeless Collection Super Lancero) and the La Palina LP Number 1 Petit Corona, which is made in Honduras.



NICARAGUA
RING GAUGE: 48 LENGTH: 4 1/4"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

ILLUSIONE CRUZADO SHORT ROBUSTO
The punchy, chewy smoke of this short cigar exhibits an elegant interplay of raisin sweetness, cinnamon and a piquant, red pepper spiciness. Complex and delicious.
U.S.: \$8.35 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

92



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
RING GAUGE: 44 LENGTH: 4 3/8"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

ASHTON VIRGIN SUN GROWN TRÉS MYSTIQUE
This dark little cigar forms a gray, flaky ash as it burns. It's a toasty smoke with hints of licorice, spice and vanilla that lead to a sweet, maple finish.
U.S.: \$10.25 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Full

90



CUBA
RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 4"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: JULY 2016

COHIBA MEDIO SIGLO
Short and squat with a flat head and neat cap. It's woody and spicy at first but becomes quite nutty showing notes of cocoa powder and minerals.
U.S.: N/A U.K.: £27.70 STRENGTH: Medium-Full

90



HONDURAS
RING GAUGE: 44 LENGTH: 4 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, HONDURAS
BINDER: COSTA RICA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

LA PALINA LP NUMBER 1 PETIT CORONA
The woody smoke of this small, well-made cigar is fortified by leathery notes and a touch of licorice. The finish is long and resonant.
U.S.: \$7.99 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

90



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
RING GAUGE: 38 LENGTH: 8"
FILLER: DOM. REP., NICARAGUA
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: HONDURAS

NAT SHERMAN TIMELESS COLLECTION SUPER LANCERO
This long, skinny cigar burns slow and evenly. Its toasty smoke unfolds to show an almond nuttiness with touches of honey, graham cracker and anise.
U.S.: \$11.65 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

90



CUBA
RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 4"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: DECEMBER 2015

ROMEO Y JULIETA PETIT CHURCHILL
A salty-and-spicy smoke whose leathery qualities are brought together by notes of coffee and walnuts, all making for a hearty cigar.
U.S.: N/A U.K.: £18.70 STRENGTH: Medium-Full

90

	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 4" FILLER: NICARAGUA, DOM. REP., PERU BINDER: DOM. REP. WRAPPER: ECUADOR	AVO SYNCRO NICARAGUA SHORT ROBUSTO A box-pressed robusto that offers a predominantly earthy smoke accompanied by notes of anise, vanilla and wheat. U.S.: \$8.90 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full	88
	NICARAGUA RING GAUGE: 44 LENGTH: 4" FILLER: NICARAGUA, DOM. REP. BINDER: INDONESIA WRAPPER: ECUADOR	PAPPY VAN WINKLE TRADITION CORONITA Minty at first, this little cigar becomes more toasty with earthy touches of barnyard and honeyed wood. A slow starter. U.S.: \$14.60 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium	88
	CUBA RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 4 3/8" FILLER: CUBA BINDER: CUBA WRAPPER: CUBA BOX DATE: MAY 2015	PARTAGÁS SERIE D NO. 5 Notes of wood and earth come in and out, as do hints of fruit, herbs and black pepper, resulting in a slightly muddled finish. U.S.: N/A U.K.: £20.00 STRENGTH: Medium	88
	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC RING GAUGE: 58 LENGTH: 4" FILLER: HONDURAS, NICARAGUA, DOM. REP., PERU, U.S.A./PENN. BROADLEAF BINDER: MEXICO WRAPPER: DOM. REP.	PSYKO SEVEN GORDITO A primarily woody, oaky cigar with some herbal undertones and a boozy, Armagnac sweetness. U.S.: \$8.48 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium	88
	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC RING GAUGE: 46 LENGTH: 3 1/2" FILLER: DOM. REP., NICARAGUA BINDER: ECUADOR, NICARAGUA WRAPPER: ECUADOR	A. FLORES GRAN RESERVA 1975 DESFLORADO HALF CORONA Tannish in color, this little smoke is nutty and spicy with woody undertones, but it burns a bit hot, causing a cherry finish. U.S.: \$5.09 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium	87
	NICARAGUA RING GAUGE: 58 LENGTH: 3" FILLER: NICARAGUA BINDER: NICARAGUA WRAPPER: ECUADOR	NUB CONNECTICUT 358 Short and fat with a tan wrapper, this stub of a cigar smokes evenly, showing a peppery smoke with hints of lemon zest and wood, but the finish is a bit dry and cherry. U.S.: \$7.14 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Mild-Medium	87
	HONDURAS RING GAUGE: 46 LENGTH: 4" FILLER: COLOMBIA, NICARAGUA, MEXICO, HONDURAS BINDER: COSTA RICA WRAPPER: NICARAGUA	ALEC BRADLEY MAXX NANO A predominantly woody, spicy smoke with some lingering tangy notes that become a bit harsh. The cigar is short, dark and oily. U.S.: \$5.25 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full	86
	NICARAGUA RING GAUGE: 45 LENGTH: 4" FILLER: NICARAGUA BINDER: NICARAGUA WRAPPER: HONDURAS	COHIBA NICARAGUA N45 Strong and powerful from the first puff, this short, fat robusto starts with notes of oak and coffee that quickly become bitter and harsh. U.S.: \$11.99 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Full	83

robustos

Though not exactly one of the most popular brands, the Cuban Vegas Robaina Famoso scored 93 points, one of the top performers of the entire issue. It's named after the famous tobacco farm once owned by the late Alejandro Robaina and now in the hands of his grandson, Hirochi. The farm has become a tourist destination for cigar fans, but the brand symbolizes the Robaina farm in name only. Habanos makes no claim or assertion that the tobacco in the Vegas Robaina brand is from any specific farm, Robaina's or otherwise. Regardless, this Famoso is everything a classic Cuban cigar should be: sweet in the right places, savory in the right places, and distinct enough to represent one of the finest tobacco appellations in the world. The Matilde Serena Robusto scored 91 points and is made in the Dominican Republic at Jochy Blanco's Tabacalera Palma factory. The brand is owned by tobacco veteran José Seijas and his son Enrique. Two cigars scored 90 points: the Casa Turrent Serie 1942 Robusto, which contains mostly Mexican tobacco, and the Montecristo Epic Craft Cured Robusto, produced in Nicaragua by the Plasencias.



CUBA
RING GAUGE: 48 LENGTH: 5"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: MARCH 2017

VEGAS ROBAINA FAMOSO
First puffs of this robusto are floral with mineral notes, but it soon segues into a nutty, creamy smoke full of leather and cocoa intonations with a bit of spice.
U.S.: N/A U.K.: £19.30 STRENGTH: Medium

93



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 5 1/4"
FILLER: DOM. REP., NICARAGUA
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

MATILDE SERENA ROBUSTO
Sweet notes of wood, walnut and citrus flow freely through the lush draw of this robusto, which leaves the sweet impression of malted chocolate on the palate.
U.S.: \$7.99 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Mild-Medium

91



MEXICO
RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 5 1/4"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, MEXICO
BINDER: MEXICO
WRAPPER: MEXICO

CASA TURRENT SERIE 1942 ROBUSTO
Sharply trunk pressed and tightly packed with tobacco. Citrus notes of orange peel swell on the palate, becoming more intense over the cigar's sweeter hints of caramel and oaky core.
U.S.: \$8.50 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

90



NICARAGUA
RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 5"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

MONTECRISTO EPIC CRAFT CURED ROBUSTO
The bright cedar notes of this well-made robusto meld pleasantly with notes of earth, citrus and toasted wheat before its rich and earthy finish.
U.S.: \$14.65 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

90



NICARAGUA
RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 5"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

601 RED LABEL HABANO ROBUSTO
A well-made robusto with a toothy, medium claro wrapper. It's a woody smoke, full of oaky, cedary notes that take on hints of cashew and cumin, but the finish is light and herbal.
U.S.: \$7.50 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

89

	NICARAGUA RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 5" FILLER: DOM. REP. BINDER: NICARAGUA WRAPPER: ECUADOR	EL GALAN SEMILLA CUBANA HABANO ROBUSTO A large cap covers the flat head of this robusto, which has a bit of a firm draw. Its earthy and woody notes hint of brown sugar and warm bread before leaving a walnut aftertaste. U.S.: \$5.40 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium	89
	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 5 1/4" FILLER: DOM. REP. BINDER: DOM. REP. WRAPPER: DOM. REP.	FUENTE FUENTE OPUSX ROBUSTO First puffs of this robusto burst with spicy notes of clove and cinnamon before a honey and graham cracker sweetness and a smoky, woody finish. U.S.: \$14.26 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Full	89
	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 4 1/2" FILLER: DOM. REP. BINDER: DOM. REP. WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. HABANO	DIAMOND CROWN BLACK DIAMOND RADIANT An earthy, cedary robusto with notes of cocoa and licorice, however a persistent chariness offset the score. U.S.: \$17.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full	88
	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 5" FILLER: DOM. REP., NICARAGUA BINDER: CAMEROON WRAPPER: ECUADOR	FRATELLO ORO ROBUSTO A tan robusto with a slightly airy draw. It's tangy and spicy, with notes of white pepper and lemon. Some intermittent sweetness leads to a straw-and-hay finish. U.S.: \$8.50 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Mild-Medium	88
	CUBA RING GAUGE: 49 LENGTH: 5 1/8" FILLER: CUBA BINDER: CUBA WRAPPER: CUBA BOX DATE: MARCH 2018	MONTECRISTO LÍNEA 1935 DUMAS Finely constructed with a three-seam cap, this robusto is a predominantly woody smoke with hints of cinnamon and a sweet note of pecan sandie cookie. U.S.: N/A U.K.: £26.60 STRENGTH: Medium	88
	CUBA RING GAUGE: 48 LENGTH: 5" FILLER: CUBA BINDER: CUBA WRAPPER: CUBA BOX DATE: JULY 2014	POR LARRAÑAGA PICADORES There are some greenish veins on the wrapper of this tawny robusto, which draws and burns evenly. It's a sweet-and-spicy cigar with notes of ginger snap, tangy earth and almond paste. U.S.: N/A U.K.: £19.30 STRENGTH: Medium-Full	88
	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 5" FILLER: DOM. REP., NICARAGUA BINDER: ECUADOR WRAPPER: DOM. REP.	LA AURORA 1962 COROJO ROBUSTO Covered in a reddish wrapper, this cigar begins with some notes of burnt mesquite and black pepper, but the finish is earthy and slightly vegetal. U.S.: \$5.75 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium	87
	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 5" FILLER: DOM. REP., NICARAGUA, U.S.A./CONN. BROADLEAF BINDER: DOM. REP. WRAPPER: ECUADOR	QUESADA SELECCIÓN ESPAÑA ROBUSTO Tawny colored in appearance, this robusto smokes evenly showing a floral character underscored by notes of tart cedar. U.S.: \$9.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full	86

TOP SCORES

-  **93** **E.P. Carrillo Encore Majestic**
Dominican Republic • \$11.50 • Corona Gorda • Medium
-  **93** **Hoyo de Monterrey Epicure Especial**
Cuba • £27.80 • Corona Gorda • Medium
-  **93** **Vegas Robaina Famoso**
Cuba • £19.30 • Robusto • Medium
-  **92** **Alec Bradley Black Market Estelí Toro**
Nicaragua • \$8.50 • Corona Gorda • Full
-  **92** **Cohiba Siglo V (Tubo)**
Cuba • £40.30 • Lonsdale • Medium
-  **92** **Illusione Cruzado Short Robusto**
Nicaragua • \$8.35 • Miscellaneous • Medium-Full
-  **92** **Mombacho Liga Maestro Hermoso**
Nicaragua • \$9.95 • Corona Gorda • Medium-Full
-  **92** **Montecristo No. 2**
Cuba • £27.00 • Figurado • Medium
-  **92** **Ramon Allones by AJ Fernandez Churchill**
Nicaragua • \$14.00 • Churchill • Full
-  **92** **Rocky Patel Vintage 1992 Churchill**
Honduras • \$10.10 • Churchill • Medium
-  **92** **Villiger San'Doro Colorado Churchill**
Nicaragua • \$9.56 • Churchill • Medium

TOP VALUES

-  **91** **Oliva Serie G Churchill**
Nicaragua • \$6.25 • Churchill • Medium-Full
-  **89** **Don Diego Lonsdale**
Dominican Republic • \$5.18 • Lonsdale • Mild-Medium
-  **89** **El Galan Semilla Cubana Habano Robusto**
Nicaragua • \$5.40 • Robusto • Medium
-  **88** **Punch Punch EMS**
Honduras • \$5.99 • Lonsdale • Medium-Full

MILDER CIGARS

- 91** **Matilde Serena Robusto**
Dominican Republic • \$7.99 • Robusto • Mild-Medium
- 90** **Ashton 8-9-8**
Dominican Republic • \$9.75 • Lonsdale • Mild
- 89** **Don Diego Lonsdale**
Dominican Republic • \$5.18 • Lonsdale • Mild-Medium
- 89** **Romeo y Julieta 1875 Cedro Deluxe No. 1**
Dominican Republic • \$7.38 • Lonsdale • Mild-Medium
- 88** **Fratello Oro Robusto**
Dominican Republic • \$8.50 • Robusto • Mild-Medium

MEDIUM-BODIED CIGARS

- 90** **L'Atelier LAT56**
Nicaragua • \$10.00 • Corona Gorda • Medium
- 90** **Montecristo No. 1**
Cuba • £21.80 • Lonsdale • Medium
- 90** **My Father Cedros Deluxe Cervantes**
Nicaragua • \$8.90 • Lonsdale • Medium
- 90** **Partagas No. 1**
Dominican Republic • \$8.79 • Lonsdale • Medium
- 89** **La Aroma de Cuba Churchill**
Nicaragua • \$6.70 • Churchill • Medium

STRONGER SMOKES

- 91** **Diesel Whiskey Row Churchill**
Nicaragua • \$8.49 • Churchill • Full
- 91** **Montecristo Línea 1935 Leyenda**
Cuba • £39.30 • Corona Gorda • Medium-Full
- 91** **Plasencia Cosecha 146 San Luis**
Honduras • \$13.50 • Corona Gorda • Medium-Full
- 91** **Rocky Patel 15th Anniversary Toro (Tubo)**
Nicaragua • \$12.40 • Corona Gorda • Medium-Full
- 90** **Ashton Virgin Sun Crown Trés Mystique**
Dominican Republic • \$10.25 • Miscellaneous • Full
- 90** **La Flor Dominicana Air Bender Chisel**
Dominican Republic • \$9.70 • Figurado • Full

BRICK HOUSE®

Handmade in Nicaragua

J.C. NEWMAN CIGAR CO.

Introducing the new Brick House Double Connecticut.

A refined Nicaraguan blend featuring a
genuine Connecticut Shade wrapper
and Connecticut Broadleaf binder.

An American twist while staying true to its roots,
an incredible flavor at a **great price.**

WWW.BRICKHOUSECIGARS.COM





98 PADRÓN SERIE 1926 40TH ANNIVERSARY (2004)

This Padrón was the first Cigar of the Year ever bestowed by this magazine, and came from one of the original painted boxes. Fourteen years later, the cigar is still full of life, nuance and character. Every puff has subtle, yet delicious notes of nutmeg and chestnuts with hints of licorice. The wrapper is pristine and the cigar has maintained its box-pressed shape perfectly. A memorable smoke. —*Marvin R. Shanken*



98 PUNCH CHURCHILL (1991)

Large Punch cigars age extremely well. Most that I've sampled have come from cabinets, but this has been resting in a dress box for 27 years. It's rich and refined, still brimming with flavor and with plenty of power. Along with hearty notes of coffee bean and honeyed wood, there's a bit of pencil lead and a wisp of leather. A sublime smoke that still has plenty of life remaining. —*David Savona*



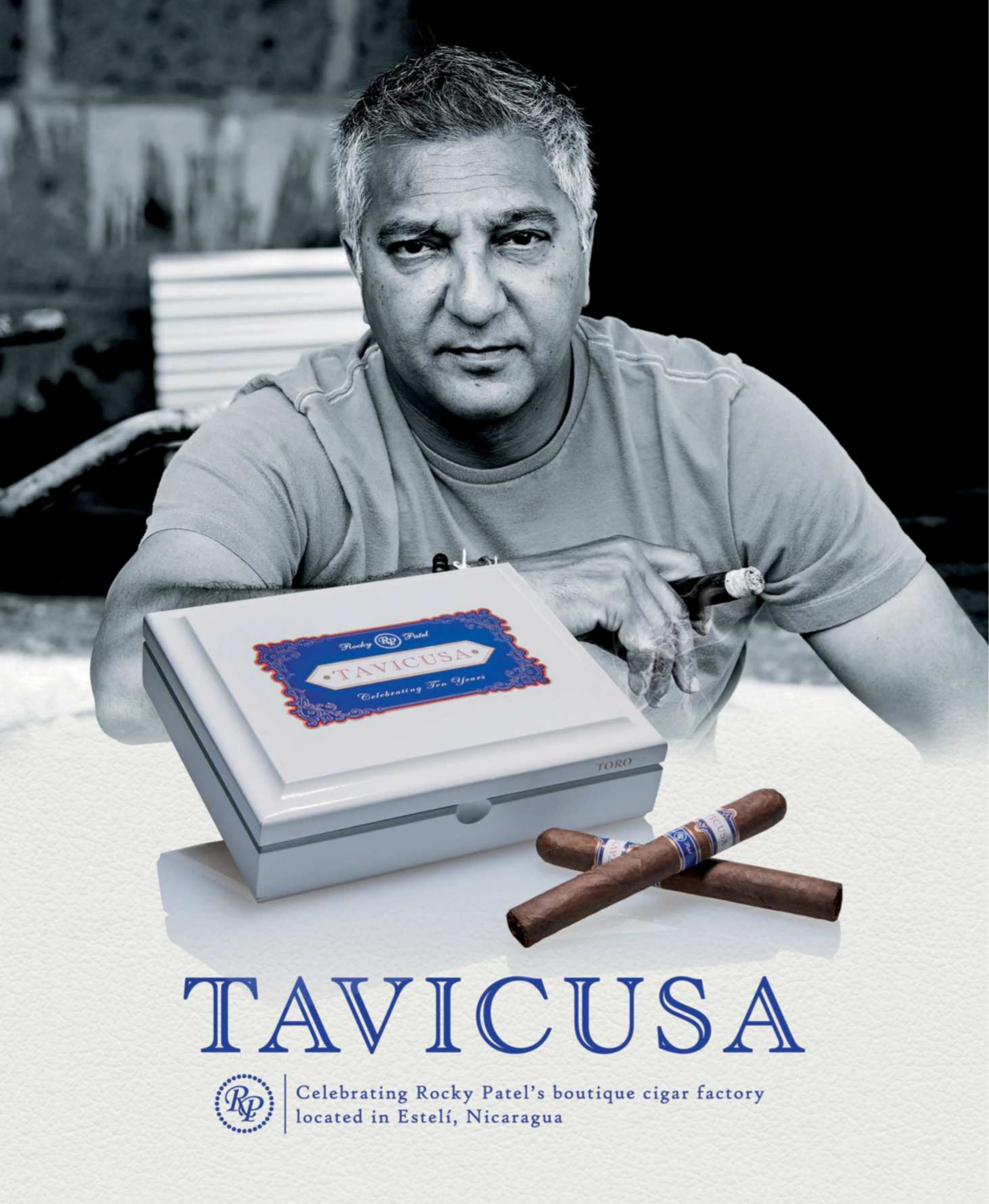
97 TATUAJE "A" UNO (2007)

More than 10 years on, this nine-inch "A" is a powerhouse that is rounding into a perfectly balanced smoke, but with years of life left. It has a perfect draw and burn. The earthy profile is filled with coffee bean and dark chocolate flavors. The finish has a pleasant mineral overtone with a sweet, dark berry note which goes on and on. A great cigar full of vibrant tobacco that's aging very well. —*Gordon Mott*



93 ROMEO Y JULIETA CEDROS DE LUXE NO. 2 (1993)

A solid Cuban corona in a cedar sleeve with no soft spots. Oils seep through the wrapper, which is medio-claro. The draw is substantial, and the burn is perfect—even, cool and slow. It's dry and woody at first, but warms to show a creamy, nutty character of almonds and hazelnuts. Touches of chocolate malt sweeten the finish, but the smoke maintains its creamy mouthfeel the entire time. —*Gregory Mottola*



TAVICUSA



Celebrating Rocky Patel's boutique cigar factory
located in Estelí, Nicaragua



Rub
C I G A R

olivacigar.com



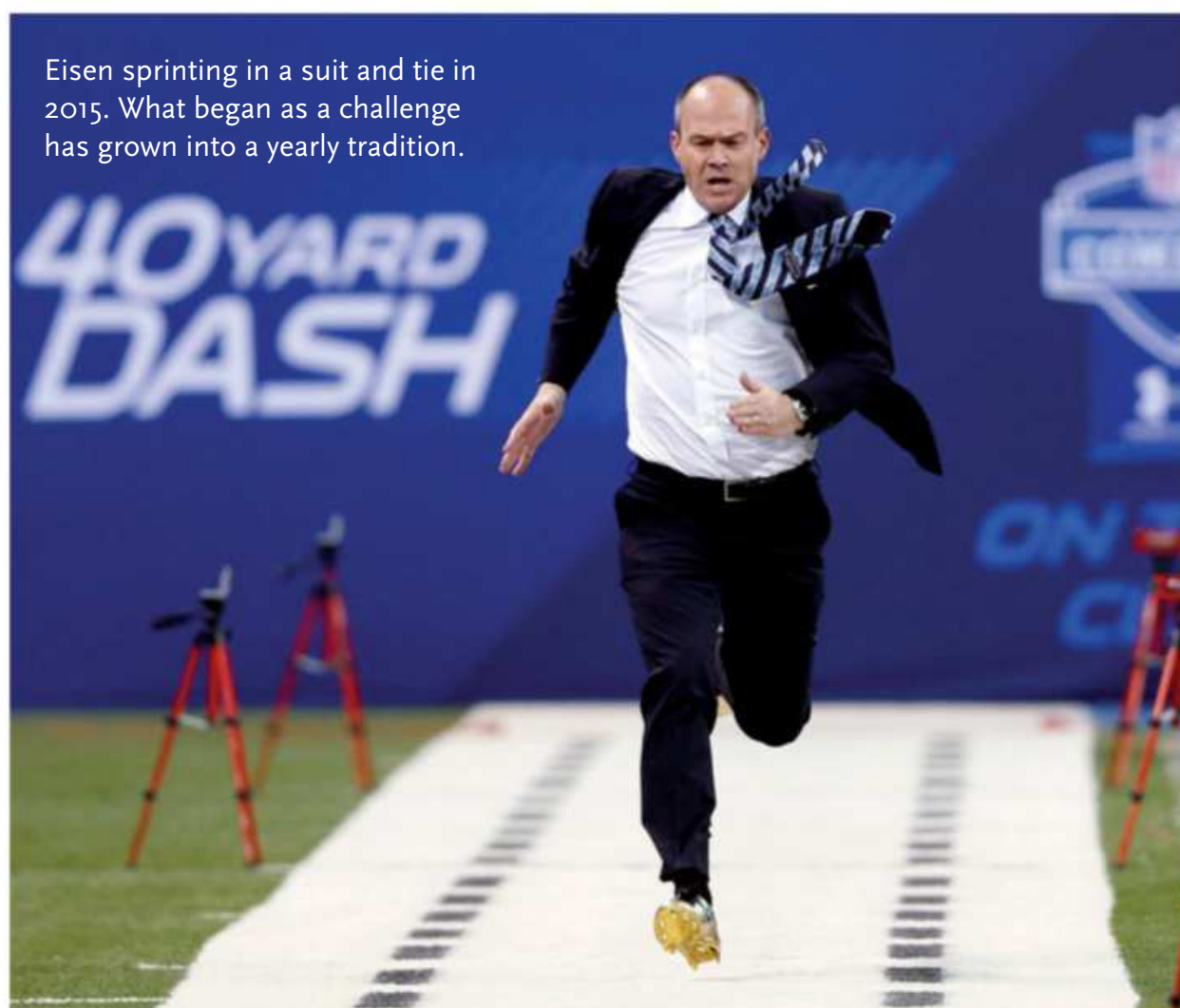
“I definitely don’t smoke cigars to train for the 40, but I definitely don’t train at all.”

Rich Eisen, sportscaster, face of the NFL Network, talk-show host and all-around funny guy, is removing his makeup after recording his daily show. He’s preparing to head for Los Angeles International to fly to Dallas to cover the NFL draft for the 13th time. He starts to riff on a question about his cigar regimen vis-à-vis his yearly 40-yard dash at the NFL Scouting Combine. Prompted by a challenge from running back Terrell Davis, it has become an annual charity benefiting St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, in which Eisen runs in a suit, shirt and tie.

“Maybe I should run with a cigar. It might change my luck. If I’m running down the track with my Partagás Serie

The Running Man

RICH EISEN HAS BEEN TALKING SPORTS WITH A HEFTY DOSE OF HUMOR FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS
BY JACK BETTRIDGE • PORTRAIT BY JIM WRIGHT



Eisen sprinting in a suit and tie in 2015. What began as a challenge has grown into a yearly tradition.

D No. 4—my favorite robusto—would it be lit is the question.” He ponders the physics of sprinting with a stogie as he sits in the DirecTV studios in Los Angeles. “If it’s lit, I don’t run fast enough to put it out. But I don’t know if the NFL would appreciate if I ashed all over the place.”

When it’s pointed out that his performance actually has been improving (his best times—sub six seconds—have all been recorded in recent years), he switches subjects to another gustatory passion. “So I’m like a fine wine—my vintage is improving with each passing year.”

Sports delivered with a healthy dollop of humor has been the trademark of Eisen since he first broke on the national broadcasting scene as a 26-year-old in 1996 with ESPN. Comedy could have

“I got a taste of what it was to write and do stand-up comedy. I always wanted to marry the two. I always wanted to crack that code.”

been his singular calling, as he dabbled in it as an undergrad at the University of Michigan. “I did stand-up comedy there for three years and thought I might do that. I did it for a couple weekends and I found I just wasn’t cut out for talking to 20 people, making very little money and being around comedy clubs [while I figured] out how to do that.”

But another collegiate extracurricular activity captivated him as well. “I also worked for my school newspaper, the *Michigan Daily*, and I covered Bo Schembechler’s final season there. I got a taste of what it was to write and do stand-up comedy. I always wanted to marry the two. I always wanted to crack that code.”

He tried the scribe part first. “I got a call from my hometown newspaper editor the day of my graduation. So I wrote for the *Staten Island Advance*. And man I sure wasn’t cut out for hard news. That just wasn’t my bag. I covered local community boards, the Koch administration, transportation, environment, the cops beat. I would always have this walkie-talkie with the codes being blurted out. I would think something was a double homicide and it would turn out to be a cat in a tree instead.”

Eisen returned to school at Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism in Chicago, and this time he focused on becoming a sports-caster. “It was really what I wanted to do growing up,” Eisen says. “When I realized I couldn’t hit a curveball or make a jump shot or do anything like that, I realized that I needed to talk about it.”

Eisen brought his sense of humor to his first gig, at ABC affiliate KRCR-TV, in the remote northern California market of Redding. Asked to cover a rodeo, the young sports reporter did a one-on-one interview—with one of the bulls.

After building up a portfolio, Eisen submitted a tape to a headhunter “under the category of it never hurts/what the hell,” he says. The headhunter called back a few months later, asking for more. A network wanted to see more, and it turned out to be ESPN, the King Kong of the sports TV world. He was hired in 1996.

“I was aged 26. I went straight from Redding, California, to the desk at ESPN.”

For Eisen, who had watched ESPN from his college frat house as Chris Berman reported on the NFL draft, it was the promised land. “Just the ride of my life,” he says. He would rub shoulders with sportscasters whose style he’d admired, such as Berman, Keith Olbermann and Craig Kilborn. Like Eisen, Kilborn had come from a small California market and flourished on “SportsCenter,” and as an ESPN rookie Eisen questioned if he could make the same transition. “I had no idea if it was possible. I thought it could be. And it did happen. They threw me right into the deep end of the pool.”

The deep end included a pairing with Stuart Scott, who had arrived two years earlier. Eisen had watched Scott on television, and the two became close, developing a charming on-air camaraderie. Scott died of cancer in 2015 at the age of 49. “One of the most joyful, full of life individuals I have ever come across,” Eisen said during an emotion-charged TV segment the day that Scott died. “As you go to bed tonight,” he said, choking back tears, “flip your pillow over to the cool side,” he said, using Scott’s most famous catchphrase.

Back in 2003, as ESPN was changing its format from highlights with storytelling banter to analysis, Eisen left to become the first on-air personality for the fledgling NFL Network. He would soon develop his annual 40-yard dash in a suit and tie. “No one should be subjected to see me wearing spandex,” he has quipped about his reasoning. It’s also his work uniform, although this day he’s wearing slacks, a sports shirt and a crewneck sweater

as he welcomes Jon Hamm of “Mad Men” fame, who is plugging his new movies *Beirut* and *Tag*—all punctuated with good-natured ribbing about sports.

Despite Eisen’s connection to the NFL, most of today’s talk is directed to baseball (the Cardinals-Cubs rivalry) and hockey (and the failure of Hamm’s favorite team the Blues to win a Stanley Cup). They first met long before Hamm found fame as Don Draper. “I had gone out with some friends,” recalls the actor. “Someone said, ‘That guy from “sports centers” is coming,’ and I said, ‘Oh cool! I like sports, at least I’ll have someone to talk to.’” Eisen’s wife-

**“Conversation is king.
A good conversation trumps
a half-hearted argument.”**

to-be, the former Suzy Shuster, was there and that is how they met. The rest is history. “I was a bartender and a waiter. He was a Staten Island kid who done good.”

The two share a comfortable on-air presence. “I like Rich’s sensibility, back from the old “SportsCenter” days. His sense of humor and intelligence and humility and genuine interest in what he’s talking about shows through,” says Hamm. “When I come here we talk about sports, we talk about this, we talk about that. It’s always easy. It’s the best kind of interview show to do because it just flows.”

It’s the kind of interview Eisen prefers to do. “It’s comfortable,” he says. “That’s what I want to have, a fun conversation. I find that a lot of celebrities when they go on panel talk shows feel like they have to create humor or create the story. With Jon I know there are a couple of sports stories you can tell, you can show his clips and go from there.”

Being comfortable with friends off screen is an opportune time for cigars, says Eisen, who enjoys smoking at poker nights and on the roof of West Hollywood’s Soho House. “I smoke as a treat or a celebration,” he says. “Normally I like to get out of Dodge right after a long event cause I’ve got three kids at home. But finishing the draft I will probably have a nice glass of wine with my guys and a cigar to sort of cap it off.”

A certain relaxed quality pervades the show, which is partly by design: “What I’m trying to do with this show right now is bring an entertainment aspect and comedy feel to an all-sports platform, and on occasion keep my journalism hat on and break news. But I would rather have a two-segment conversation like the one I had with Jon Hamm today than a deep dive with a fellow



Eisen often has celebrities on his eponymous show, such as Matt Damon (right) and “Saturday Night Live” alum Bill Hader (above).

journalist on the subject of the NFL draft. And so far so good.”

The show, which is produced by AT&T, is simulcast on more than 150 radio stations. With its radio presence and video podcasts at richeishow.com, the production is an odd mix. “It’s different,” says Eisen. “It’s techni-

cally a TV show on radio rather than a lot of other simulcasts that are more like radio shows on TV. All I know is I’m enjoying it.”

Material like the Jon Hamm interview will be sliced up into different bite-size pieces for the app, tweets and Facebook posts. “That’s to me the metric, to have a digital platform and get more and more people watching it if they haven’t already seen it live.”

And there’s always laughter. The host has cultivated a coterie of comedians and a relationship with website Funny or Die to continue the mirth. Eisen’s approach—the lighthearted conversation, the satires on the sometimes oh-so-serious reportage—is a fresh departure from the typical sports talk show in which experts bicker over what cornerback is the league’s best or which rule change would improve the game. And it’s one that he revels in.

“Conversation is king,” he says. “A good conversation trumps a half-hearted argument.” ❖

2018 ELS FOR AUTISM

Golf Challenge



12 REGIONAL EVENTS ACROSS THE U.S.
BETWEEN APRIL AND OCTOBER.

Raise \$13,000 or more to qualify your team
for the Grand Finale in Palm Beach, Florida.

US Events	Location	Date	Entry Fee Per Player
PGA National Champion Course	Palm Beach Gardens, FL	4/30/18	\$650
Duke University Golf Club	Durham, NC	5/21/18	\$550
Capital City Club Crabapple Course	Milton, GA	5/22/18	\$950
The Philadelphia Cricket Club	Flourtown, PA	7/16/18	\$1,000
Sahalee Country Club	Sammamish, WA	7/30/18	\$650
Conway Farms Golf Club	Lake Forest, IL	8/20/18	\$950
CordeValle Golf Club	San Martin, CA	8/30/18	\$950
Harbour Town Golf Links	Hilton Head Island, SC	9/10/18	\$650
TPC Potomac at Avenel Farm	Potomac, MD	9/10/18	\$950
Windsong Farm Golf Club	Independence, MN	9/17/18	\$550
Trump National Golf Club Bedminster	Bedminster, NJ	9/18/18	\$1,500
The Club at Carlton Woods	The Wood- lands, TX	10/1/18	\$600

Connect with us!



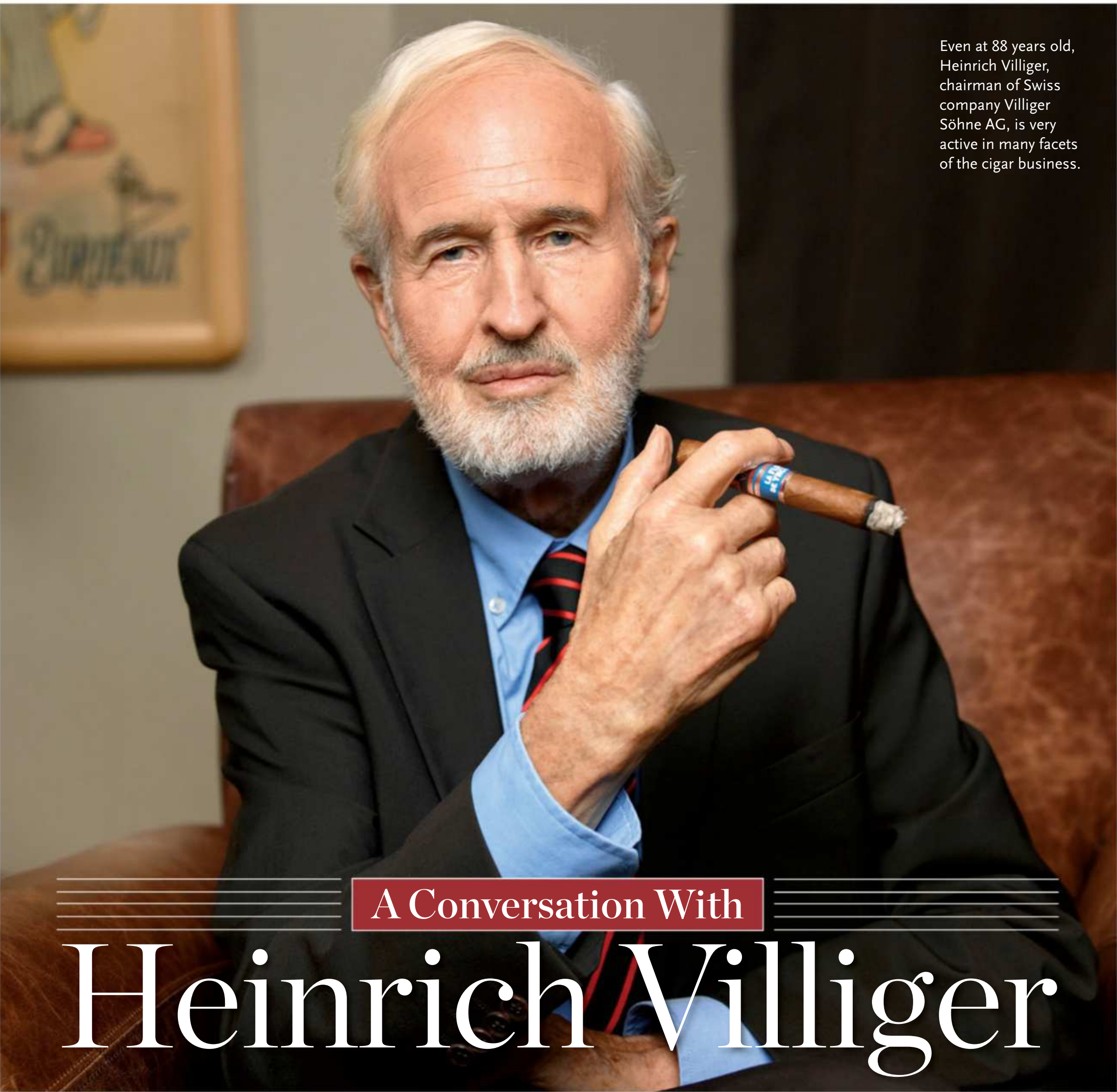
SIGN UP ONLINE
WWW.E4AGOLF.COM



Presented By:



Wine Spectator

A portrait of Heinrich Villiger, an 88-year-old man with white hair and a beard, wearing a dark suit, light blue shirt, and striped tie. He is sitting in a brown leather chair and holding a cigar in his right hand. In the background, a framed picture of a bird is visible on the wall.

Even at 88 years old, Heinrich Villiger, chairman of Swiss company Villiger Söhne AG, is very active in many facets of the cigar business.

A Conversation With

Heinrich Villiger

Slender and soft spoken, Heinrich Villiger may be one of the most formidable players in the cigar industry. He owns Villiger Söhne AG, a massive cigar operation based in Pfeffikon, Switzerland that produces more than a billion dry cured, European-style cigars every year. He is the exclusive

importer and distributor of Cuban cigars to five countries in Europe. And he owns a growing portfolio of premium cigar brands sold in the United States, most notably Villiger La Flor de Ynclan, which was named the No. 10 Cigar of the Year in 2017 by this magazine. Active and sharp, the 88-year-old came to CIGAR AFICIONADO'S

offices in New York City to have a smoke and share his stories of a career in tobacco that goes back to the 1950s, when he first visited Cuba, a country he has traveled to more than 100 times. Executive editor David Savona and senior editor Greg Mottola sat down with "Mr. Villiger" for a fascinating lesson in cigar history.

CIGAR AFICIONADO: How did you get started in the business?

VILLIGER: My grandfather started the company in 1888. He was in charge of finance for one of the big cheroot companies. Then he decided to open a cigar factory himself, and he became independent. His boss gave him a credit to start his own company. In 1902 he died when he was 42, so my grandmother managed the company for about 16 years until my father and my uncle continued, but my uncle had no children so my uncle sold his shares to my father. And my father and myself continued together until my father passed away. I was the only shareholder.

Q: What did you do in your earliest days in the business?

A: There were auctions for cigarette and cigar tobacco, not anymore for cigars, but the auctioneering was very quick, and there was a little sign if you wanted to buy one basket of tobacco, was maybe a hundred pounds, 200 pounds. The farmers usually put the good quality on top and the low quality inside, and my job was to follow the auctions. I'd lift up the tobacco, pull it out, put it on the top and compare the quality. If it was not the same, I could tear up the ticket.

the Kentucky. We bought a lot of dark-fired Kentucky. Then it got too expensive and we bought dark-fired tobaccos in Malawi. Malawi's economy depends on tobacco.

Q: Were you exporting Villiger cigars to the U.S. at the time?

A: Shortly after World War II we started to export our machine-made cigars to the U.S. We had an importer in New York. Many American soldiers knew our products from their sojourns in Germany.

Q: Do you use tobacco from Malawi for your Villiger dry-cured product?

A: Yes. You need a lot of wood to dry it, to cure it. We buy a lot, we need it. Last year we made 1.5 billion units, so we need a lot of tobacco.

Q: Where is your biggest market?

A: Germany. Our German market share is maybe around 70 percent.

Q: You must have to buy enormous amounts of tobacco.

A: We buy a lot from many countries. We buy a lot of tobacco from Cuba, but Cuba has always been exporting leaf. It's good tobacco, it's good leaf. We buy from the south, we buy from Vuelta Abajo—that's in

Q: But that's no longer the case.

A: Things changed dramatically when the U.S. enacted the embargo against Cuba. From one day to another Cuba lost its most important market. Then Cuban delegates from Cubatabaco started touring around the world looking for new markets. They came also to see us and presented the high quality of their leaf, grades which were not known to us before. They invited me to visit Cuba and to inspect their tobacco in their processing plants and warehouses. And they offered good prices. This was the beginning of our relationship with Cuba. We increased substantially the share of Cuban tobacco in all our blends and became one of the largest buyers of Cuban tobacco.

Q: You don't put Cuban tobacco in your premium cigars, do you? Or anything that comes to the U.S.?

A: No.

Q: In addition to your own cigar manufacturing company, you import and distribute Cuban cigars in Europe. How many countries do you distribute Cuban cigars to?

A: We have two companies with Habanos. One in Switzerland, that's Intertabak. Then we have 5th Avenue in Germany.

Q: How did that come about?

A: Thirty or 40 years ago, the cigar image was negative. The main cigars sold were 30-cent cigars. Nobody dared to increase the cost, so the quality was going down to save money and this made the image of the cigar quite negative. Then I had an advertising man, he was excellent, he said, "Mr. Villiger, you must lift the image of the cigar. The cigar must have a better image as a luxury product."

Q: How did you do it?

A: I recommended we make a mail-order catalog business with luxury goods—the best cigars, the best watches, Swiss watches—so, in 1976 we added to our mass-production business a 40-page catalog of all luxury products. And then we needed a name for this organization, and the most famous street for luxury products was 5th Avenue [in New York]. So we called this organization 5th Avenue Tobacco Gallery. We had cigars, we had pipes, pipe tobacco, the best of the best.

"Things changed dramatically when the U.S. enacted the embargo against Cuba. From one day to another, Cuba lost its most important market."

Q: So it was tobacco that you had already purchased by bid but after you inspected it, you could cancel the bid?

A: Yes, cancel the bid. I had all the farmers on my back. I came with my schooling from Switzerland. They didn't understand me. I didn't understand the farmers with their slang. But I did this for a whole season. Then I was sorting Connecticut Shade in Hartford, and then I sorted broadleaf tobacco in Massachusetts. To learn, we have to do the work. That's how I started.

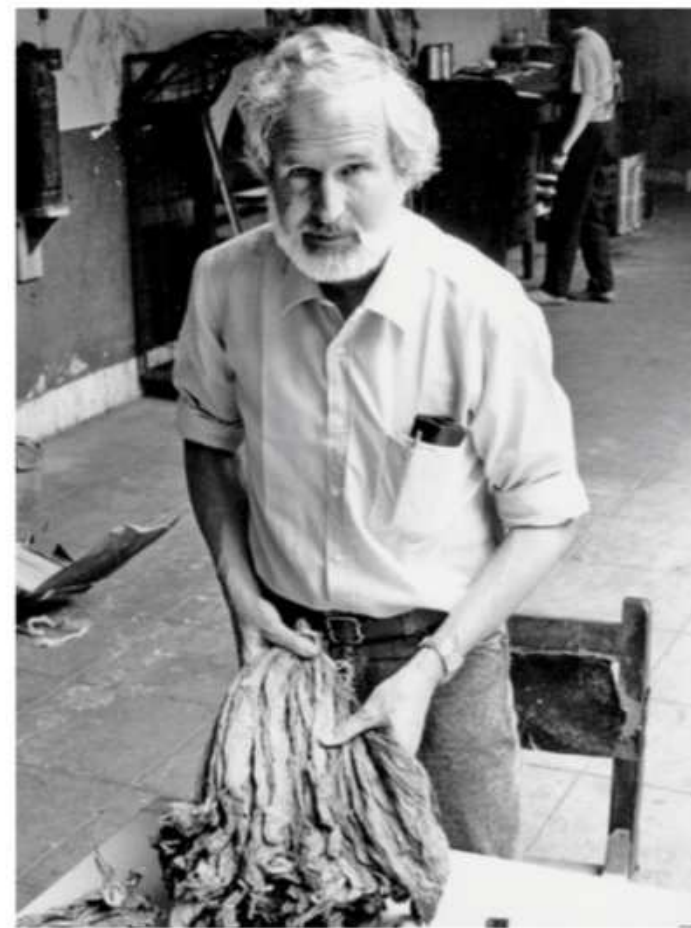
Q: What year was this?

A: It was 1951. The auction was for flue-cured tobacco in South Carolina, North Carolina. Then, in winter, came the burley,

the west part of the island—and we buy also from the east part.

Q: Villiger has a long relationship with Cuba, and as you said, you use Cuban tobacco in some of your machine-made cigars. Can you describe how that relationship began?

A: Cuban leaf tobacco is considered as one of the best cigar tobaccos in the world. But since the establishment of our company by my grandfather in 1888, we were and are using Cuban leaf tobacco in a substantial part of our different [machine-made] blends. The most important buyer of Cuban leaf, and also Cuban cigars, in the past has always been the United States.



Villiger with legendary grower Alejandro Robaina (left photo) on the porch of his Cuban farmhouse. Right, Villiger inspects tobacco in Cuba, circa 1988.

Q: Were you doing business directly with Habanos at that time?

A: No. That was only for us. But then Habanos had a president named Francisco Padrón. I think he was the first president of Cubatabaco. Padrón came to me and said, “Look, we have a problem, we have taken over all those private companies.” Each country had four or five distributors for Cuban cigars—one for Partagás, one for Montecristo, and so on—and he said that logistically that was a problem.

Q: How many Cuban cigar distributors were in Germany at the time?

A: In Germany there were two or three. In England there were four or five. In Switzerland, there were a couple. So Padrón invited all the distributors to a meeting in Zurich airport. He said to the people there—about 40 people from all around—“We cannot have three or four distributors in each country. One! One distributor per country, and he gets everything. All the brands. But we want the share of 50 percent.”

Q: Habanos wanted 50 percent of the distribution?

A: Yes. But the distributors were very reluctant and they refused. Padrón came to me and asked, “Villiger, how are you doing it?” We were not an importer. Then we integrated and we stopped with our catalog

business, and then 5th Avenue Products Trading GmbH became the [Habanos] agency for Germany. The other [distributors] said to me, “Villiger, you are a traitor.”

Q: What year was 5th Avenue established as the sole importer for Cuban cigars in Germany?

A: I think it was 1989.

Q: And Intertabak distributes to Switzerland. Do you own Intertabak too?

A: The idea of Padrón was 50-50. In Switzerland, it was 50 percent Habanos, but what about the other 50 percent? He said, “I have another friend, another good friend in Switzerland, the Levy family.” It’s a family in Geneva. Very nice people. So in Switzerland, we have 25 percent, and Levy has 25 percent. Better 25 than nothing.

Q: As a distributor, you sell to the tobacconists, including the La Casa del Habano shops?

A: Yes, and the Casa has everything. The Casa must have the whole range. We are short on the special editions and limited editions, but the Casas have them. The Casas have priority.

Q: You say you are short on special editions, but I remember you mentioning that you got 10 of those expensive Cohiba humidors, those big, 50th Anniversary humidors

with the gold-leaf panels.

A: We sold 10. The retail price was 195,000 euros each (\$228,000). That’s for 50 cigars. You buy, of course, the humidor. It’s a beautiful piece of furniture.

Q: Did you sell these humidors to any private collectors?

A: No. Just to the Casas del Habano.

Q: There’s a rumor that some countries get preferential treatment and receive better quality cigars from Cuba than others. Have you found this to be true?

A: I am convinced that this rumor is not correct. Cuban cigars are sold worldwide with the same quality. The origin of presumed quality differences may come from inappropriate storage without enough ventilation and humidity.

Q: Tell me more about your first premium brand for Villiger, because that’s a rather new venture given the company’s long history.

A: The first premium brand was from Matias Maragoto [owner of the ABAM factory in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic]. I had a very good friend and he died a few years ago, Alfredo Perez, the owner of A.S.P. I asked if he could recommend a good company, and he recommended Matias. It’s a nice factory. It’s like a subsidiary, but we have no interest in the company.



Heinrich Villiger shares stories with executive editor David Savona and senior editor Greg Mottola.

Q: What was the name of the brand?

A: It was Bock. Gustav Bock, a cigar manufacturer of German origin in Cuba, is said to be the inventor of the cigar band to identify his cigars. After the Revolution, the Cubans stopped producing a lot of different brands. Many were discontinued. Bock was discontinued. La Flor de Ynclan was discontinued. La Vencedora was discontinued, so we registered some of those brands. The lawyer from Imperial accused me of pirating. But a trademark, when it is not used for more than five years, is unprotected. If you don't use it, you lose it. I told him, "Look, if you have not used the brand for five years, that's not my problem, that's your problem."

Q: Wasn't Bock sold only in Europe?

A: Yes.

Q: What year did you launch Bock?

A: In 1998, in Germany and Switzerland.

Q: What about the other premium cigars that you sell in Europe?

A: We also have cigars from Nicaragua. We have San'Doro. It's a Latin name for the tobacco plant. The ships went to India and came back with tobacco, and this was the name. I created San'Doro. You have San'Doro from Nicaragua and one from Brazil. We started in Brazil many years ago. We called the company Tobajara, but nobody knew what that meant, so we changed our brands from Tobajara to Villiger do Brazil.

Q: Did you find it difficult to sell non-Cuban premium cigars in Europe?

A: Yes, because the Cubans—Montecristo, Partagás—had been on the market for 100 years. Nobody knows the new brands, so the new brand must have a story. The smoker wants to know the history of the brand.

Q: What are your observations on the U.S. premium cigar market?

A: It's a big market, and it's increasing. And, you know, last year, Nicaragua was No. 1. Some big European companies are coming now to Nicaragua too, like Vandermarliere, the Belgians who own and import Oliva. Oliva was then sold to Vandermarliere. Vandermarliere is quite aggressive.

Q: Isn't J. Cortez the company?

A: Yes, J. Cortez, but the family's name is Vandermarliere. They are one of our biggest competitors [for machine-made cigars]. They are very strong in France, but we have had bad luck in France. We have very little market share in France. It is a problematic market.

Q: In 2016, when you opened up your U.S. headquarters in Florida, you told us that machine-made cigars were 99 percent of your business, but that you hoped it would grow. So here we are, two years later.

A: Well of course, now it's more. Our core business is still the production of machine-made small cigars and cheroots. In value, the machine-made share is around 85

percent of our sales, the remaining 15 percent are handmade.

Q: From 1 percent of the business to 14—that's quite a change. How many premium cigars do you sell to the U.S. each year?

A: We sold approximately 1.2 million premium cigars during the first six months of this year in the U.S. market.

Q: The Villiger Flor de Ynclan was named the No. 10 Cigar of the Year by CIGAR AFICIONADO for 2017. How has the U.S. market responded to Villiger's premium cigars like Flor de Ynclan?

A: We are satisfied with the reaction of the U.S. cigar trade and the U.S. cigar smokers to our range of premium cigars. They were, without exception, positive. This compliment is also due to the manufacturers of our cigars in the Dominican Republic and in Central America.

Q: What is your best-selling premium cigar brand?

A: The best sellers differ from one country to another. In the U.S. it is La Flor de Ynclan.

Q: Do you have children in the business?

A: I have on the board a daughter. She's a doctor in medicine. I have just elected on the board a grandson. I hope that we can keep it in the family. Villiger is privately owned. All shares are held by the family.

Q: Of all the premium cigars that you make, which is your personal favorite?

A: I very much like the Villiger San'Doro from Brazil. It's a Brazilian puro. Brazil has good tobacco.

Q: Given your success with machine-made cigars, why did you enter premium?

A: I believe in the premium cigar. There is potential for the category to grow. But usually you do what you like yourself. And I smoke only premium cigars.

Q: That was your incentive? Because you like to smoke premium cigars?

A: Yes. Because I like them. You should do in your life what you like. I started to work in our company at the age of 20 in the year 1950, that is 68 years ago, all fascinating. The most significant change is the success story of the premium cigar. ❖



There's No Other
Magazine Like It—In The World

Visit CigarAficionado.com to Subscribe

DEFINED HERITAGE. RE-DEFINED CONNECTICUT.

INTRODUCING H. UPMANN CONNECTICUT,
A RE-DEFINED CONNECTICUT THAT EXHIBITS A FULLER
AND DEEPER FLAVOR. COMBINING OVER 200 YEARS OF
CIGAR-MAKING AND REFINEMENT, THE GRUPO DE
MAESTROS, A BROTHERHOOD OF MASTER BLENDEES,
INSPIRED TO CREATE A NEW DEFINITION OF A TIME
HONORED LEGEND.



CONNECTICUT
GRUPO DE MAESTROS



SURGEON GENERAL WARNING: Tobacco
Smoke Increases The Risk Of Lung Cancer
And Heart Disease, Even In Nonsmokers.

Re-define yourself at [@hupmann_usa](https://www.instagram.com/hupmann_usa)

©2018 Altadis U.S.A. Inc.

Cuba's Cigar Sommeliers

These trained cigar waiters recommend a brand, cut and light your cigar, then pick the perfect beverage to accompany your smoke BY GORDON MOTT

The meal at La Guarida, Havana's best private restaurant, was over, and everyone's thoughts turned to cigars. We asked to see the cigar selection. Marcelo Leonel Rodríguez approached the table with a wooden tray with dividers, each section filled with cigars: Montecristos, H. Upmanns, some Romeo y Julietas and a few Cohiba Siglo IIIs and IVs. His first question explored if we were regular smokers or not. The former Festival del Habano sommelier contestant asked what we had eaten for dinner, and what we wanted for an after-dinner drink. When I said I wanted an aged rum, preferably a Santiago 11-year-old, he pondered for a minute and suggested a Romeo y Julieta Wide Churchill. Being particular about my cigar, I declined his offer to light it, but the service was readily available.

While not as ubiquitous as wine sommeliers are today, the cigar waiter is more and more common in Cuba, and in some major cities like London, Dubai and Hong Kong. Their arrival on the fine-dining scene isn't just by chance. The Cuban government is supporting a training program, created and overseen by Fernando Fernandez, one of the country's leading cigar and spirits experts. Up to now, the sole professional cigar training was given by the Master Sommelier program, but it constituted a small part of their program.

"We are trying to enhance the tourist experience with Cuban culture," says Fernandez, puffing on a Hoyo de Monterrey Epicure No. 2. "And, tobacco is part of our culture. We wanted professionals educating people about it." He said that there are many restaurants in Havana that have cigar sommelier graduates including La Guarida, Castropol and El Templete, a government-run seafood restaurant where two women oversee the cigar service.

The Habanos Sommelier program started 15 years ago. The original program was designed by Fernandez, a gregarious, loudly opinionated man who loves cigars, and loves to talk



Darius Namdar of London's Mark's Club, the Habanos Sommelier of the year.

about the best way to enjoy them. He earned a Wine and Spirits Education Trust diploma years ago. But he said he realized no similar teaching text existed for cigars. Using the same basic format of WSET's program of lectures, tastings and hands-on experience, he designed a sommelier course for cigars.

The entire course takes between 18 months to two years to complete, because most students have other jobs and the classes are given in sections. Each graduate receives about 480 hours of instruction, Fernandez says. He estimates that fewer than 25 percent of the students who begin the program, finish it. There are tests at each stage, which deal with all aspects of wine, spirits, tobacco and cigars, the latter divided into brands, service and beverage accompaniments. For instance, in 2016, 61 students began the program in April, and by October, only 23 were left, Fernandez says, and the course still had more than a year to go. Since inception, the program has graduated about

“If you want to learn Samba, you go to Brazil. If you want to learn about cigars, you go to Cuba.”



Fernando Fernandez (left photo, seated second from left) started the Habanos Sommelier program. At right, Namdar presents to judge Gary Heathcott.

300 people, with more than 250 of them living and working in Cuba. He expects Habanos to begin offering the courses in other countries around the world, but for now, if a foreigner wants the official Habanos training, he must come to Cuba. And, there are several distributors around the world—including Hunters & Frankau in the United Kingdom—that train people using materials based on the Habanos course.

“First, we train them as a wine sommelier,” Fernandez says. The students take classes in wine appreciation, wine service and restaurant operations. The detailed courses even show what type of glass to serve each type of wine (or spirits) using Riedel stemware. The training then shifts to tobacco. Fernandez says the students visit fields and farms, getting to know growers. They also are allowed entrance into factories that normally are closed to outsiders, where they smoke cigars with rollers and top tobacco men. “We teach them about how difficult it is to make a good cigar, and what goes into the construction,” Fernandez says, “and then we teach them how to taste a cigar.”

The next step, Fernandez says, is to study—“in depth”—all Habanos’ brands. “There are 289 vitolas in 27 brands, and they have to know everything about each size,” Fernandez says. “And, there are new ones every year that they have to learn about.” He says the training includes the cutting and lighting of a cigar and how best to marry the cigar with a particular spirit.

“They have to know the difference between say, a short cigar, like a robusto, and a double corona, the time of day to smoke a particular strength cigar, and then the preference of the smoker,” Fernandez says. “If they are occasional smokers or regulars, or if they are a female, all that can make a difference in deciding which cigar to suggest, and then recommending a drink to go with it.”

Fernandez says the Habanos Sommelier program is now taught regionally inside Cuba. Each year, the program brings the best students from each region for a competition to represent Cuba in the annual Festival del Habano sommelier contest. Cubans have won the contest at least three times since its first year in 2002, and there is always a Cuban representative among the contestants. A panel of international judges, which

includes Fernandez, observes the contestants in preliminary rounds where they must identify two cigars and five spirits, all presented blind. They then present their own beverage and cigar and discuss the merits of the pairing to the panel. The judges select three, sometimes four, persons to take part in the final round on the closing day of the Festival. In that final round, the judges present the candidate with a specific scenario, with two live actors posing as cigar smokers. In 2017, a Chilean, Felipe Rojas, who had taken the course in Cuba, won a tight verdict.

Darius Namdar, a graduate of the Hunters & Frankau master cigar sommelier program, earned the title of Habanos Sommelier for 2018. He is also the general manager of Mark’s Club in London. “Both of my guests in the competition said they liked full-flavored cigars,” Namdar said. He chose a slim Partagás 8-9-8 and a Partagás Serie P No. 2, a figurado, from the humidor on the stage. For the 8-9-8 smoker, who wanted an aged dark rum, he paired the cigar with a Havana Club Selección de Maestros, and for the other man, a Scotch drinker, he picked a Glenlivet 18-year-old. “I’ve been surrounded by cigars all my life. My father was a big cigar smoker,” said Namdar. He entered the Hunters program after taking over Marks Club, and realizing that his patrons wanted someone with serious cigar knowledge to help make their selections. He said he would celebrate with a Trinidad Fundadores from 1998, but since this expert doesn’t actually drink alcohol himself, he said he would probably pair his smoke with a cup of tea.

In 2017, Slawomir Bielicki, a crowd favorite who represented the United Kingdom, finished second in the competition. “Every experience, every cigar served, was always a different approach due to the occasion, personal preferences, meal or drink which accompanied it and it always revealed an interesting character or story,” said Bielicki, a former cigar sommelier at the Churchill Bar & Terrace in London. “Every cigar has a different story.”

In the end, Fernandez said that the cigar sommelier program is building on the tradition and culture of cigars worldwide, and there is no better place in the world to learn the craft. “If you want to learn Samba, you go to Brazil. If you want to learn about cigars, you come to Cuba.” ♦

We invite you to discover and enjoy our combined artistic expression, DUETO.



BORIS WINTERMANS

SERIE SIGNATURAS

DUETO is the result of a special collaboration between two of the most passionate and dedicated Dominican boutique premium cigar makers, Ernesto Pérez-Carrillo and Boris Wintermans. While each cigar maker has a unique and distinguished personal tobacco history, they share the philosophy that relentless, passionate curiosity is essential to discovering and enjoying the best life has to offer.

Blended by the legendary Ernesto Pérez-Carrillo to excite the senses, DUETO captures the complex intersection of two distinct premium cigar blending signatures. Incorporating each cigar makers' hand-selected, preferred tobaccos, this cigar blend delivers a special, one-of-a-kind sensorial experience for the curious – the signature elegant robustness of Ernesto Pérez-Carrillo cigars and the signature balance of sophisticated complexity and smoothness of Boris Wintermans' Balmoral handmade cigars.

#CuriosityDrivesDiscovery

BALMORALCIGARS.COM   

moments to remember

Please send all submissions to: CIGAR AFICIONADO/Moments to Remember, Worldwide Plaza, 825 Eighth Avenue, 33rd Floor, New York, NY 10019. Or email them to: momentstoremember@mshanken.com. To order additional copies of CIGAR AFICIONADO, call 1-800-344-0763.



Richard Overton, America's oldest man—and cigar smoker—at home in Austin, Texas, with his CIGAR AFICIONADO.



A group of good friends from Little Rock, Arkansas, travel to Havana, Cuba, in March 2018 to attend the 20th annual Habanos Festival. During the final night gala dinner, the guys shared a cigar alongside CIGAR AFICIONADO senior contributing editor Gordon Mott. From left, Charlie Spakes, Carlton Saffa, Mott, Keith Emis and Nathan Reed.



After a successful grand opening of Lord Puffer Cigars in Escondido, California, Liana Fuente, left, Cynthia Fuente, center, store owner Angela Yue, right, and Carlos Fuente Jr., back, wind down by smoking Fuente Fuente OpusX cigars.



Nish Patel of Rocky Patel Premium Cigars Inc. lights up with members of The Cigar Club at The Ritz-Carlton in St. Louis, Missouri, during their 20th Anniversary Scotch & Chocolate Jubilee Dinner.



Lou Sciarretta and Tim Galu smoke Cohiba and My Father cigars at Brooklawn Country Club in Fairfield, Connecticut.



There's no better way to enjoy the good life than catching up with friends while enjoying premium cigars and libations. Pictured from left to right: Lou Solly, Edgar Enriquez, Richard Barrett, Edgar Rodriguez, Steve Pajor, Jim Jackson and Hunt Coracci from Vancouver, Washington, gather for their semi-annual cigars and whiskey night.



Adrian Fernandez, Frank Mujica, Don Paul, Ariamna Contino Mendoza and Alex Fernandez hoist their copy of CIGAR AFICIONADO's Cuba issue at an art studio and gallery in Havana.



John Kane and his son Adam enjoy a couple of fine cigars during their summer vacation in Asheville, North Carolina, before Adam heads back to school at North Carolina State University.



A very happy anniversary to Alyce and Chuck Grover of Tucson, Arizona, pictured here in sunny Breisach, Germany, last June, as they puff on premium cigars and sip excellent libations.

MBOMBAY GAAJA

WWW.BOMBAYTOBAK.COM





Amir Zoveini, Alex Ravari and Alon Ofir puff on handmade cigars as they play a round at Tijeras Creek Golf Club in Rancho Santa Margarita, California.



Christopher Zarycki savors cigars on his wedding day with good friends Joe Bindert, Anthony Naia and Pete Vandervalk at La Terrazza in Belmar, New Jersey.



Carmine Somma and Virgen Carrasquillo from the Bronx, New York, get ready to light up cigars while on vacation in Aruba for a good friend's 50th birthday.



Veterans Heath Holcomb, George Sykora, Dan Buttery and Chad Brown hit the links to support fallen soldiers and their loved ones in Fort Hood, Texas.



Mike Piergrossi, Nick Piergrossi, Paul Curry and Rob Giraldi enjoy cigars at The Carolina Hotel after golf at Pinehurst No. 2 in Pinehurst, North Carolina.



Don Miller and Brad Parent relax with their cigars after winning the Pentacle Golf Tournament at Geneva National Golf Club in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin.



Dr. Marc Factor and Dr. Jeffrey Spodek celebrate Marc's 50th birthday with La Flor Dominicana cigars in Toronto, Canada.



Shannon Girouard challenges cigar-smoking NBA legend John Salley to a game of one-on-one at CIGAR AFICIONADO's Big Smoke Miami.



While deployed in Africa, Kenneth Mantle of Georgia, Forrest Antioco of Georgia and Tim Kring of Tennessee relax with a little Scotch whisky and a round of premium handrolled cigars.



Phi Beta Sigma fraternity brothers Louis Lord and Marc Ellis light up on the links at Alfred Tup Holmes Golf Course in Atlanta, Georgia.



Daniel Kozloski savors a Cuban Cohiba Pirámides Extra with his wife Bianca on their five-year-anniversary trip to Cinque Terre, Italy.



A LEGEND AMONG LANDMARKS

A standard for cigar aficionados for over 20 years, Shelly's Back Room is a comfortable, yet still elegant, retreat in which to enjoy fine cigars and choose from a distinguished assortment of single malt and blended whiskies.

Lunch, dinner and late-night menus offer the perfect complement to your cigar smoking pleasure.

A new, state-of-the-art continuous fresh air system will make your visit to Washington's best cigar tavern even better!

Shelly's Back Room

1331 F. Street NW • Washington, D.C.
202.737.3003 • SHELLYSBACKROOM.COM





PROCIGAR Festival

2019

FEB 17-22

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Cigar Country



While on vacation in Cuba, Janell and Brian Hahn, along with Geri Hutchings and Gage Kent relax with cold beers and premium cigars in the V.I.P. room of the Partagás Factory in Havana.



U.S. Army 2nd Lieutenant David P. Mitchell lights up Casa Magna cigars with his brother Tim and father David upon graduating from the Georgia Military College in Milledgeville, Georgia.



Friends Gary Hopper, Terry Storm, Tom Hennie and Kelly McKay celebrate the Philadelphia Eagles Super Bowl victory with Arturo Fuente and Drew Estate cigars in Alta Loma, California.



Celebrating cigars at Habana Palooza in Albany, New York. Standing, from left: Bruce Hidley, Tony Gilberti and Charlie Diamond. Seated, from left: Ed Rice, Paul Bombard and Mark Cady.



Mark Pratt, Dominic Parisi and Justin Morris enjoy Liga Privada No. 9 cigars and libations while getting ready to cheer on the New England Patriots from Yorba Linda, California.



Matt Anaya, Alex Benes, Matthew Kang, Stan Lee and Wonho Frank Lee savor premium cigars and a *lechón asado* (a whole roast pig, who also enjoys cigars) in Thousand Oaks, California.

NEW FROM EL ARTISTA CIGARS
CIMARRON

**LIVE
WILD &
FREE**

ElArtistaCigar
f t i



Longtime fans of the Philadelphia Eagles, Paul Hentrup and Roger Allen from Jasper, Indiana, enjoy a Super Bowl cigar with their inflatable friend “Bubba.”



Tim Rieckmann of Mooresville, North Carolina, and Tom Haben of Shawnee, Kansas, savor Cohiba Siglo VI cigars at the Ashford Castle in Cong, Ireland.



John Fronza, left, and his good friend Mike Roveccio share a couple of premium cigars in the memory of John’s wife Deborah in Tampa, Florida.



Mark Eastin and his son Stephen Eastin of Bowling Green, Kentucky, celebrate the good life while admiring the long ashes on their Oliva Serie V cigars.



The Ormsby men—Russ, A.J., Aaron, Robert and Rusty—reunite in Orlando, Florida, to spend some quality time together over premium cigars and libations.



Friends Todd Alfonso, Scott Barnes, Roger Kramer and Ron Winkley light up a round of fine cigars on their Adirondack fishing trip in Speculator, New York.

CIGAR AFICIONADO (ISSN #1063-7885) is published bimonthly by M. Shanken Communications, Inc., Worldwide Plaza, 825 Eighth Avenue, 33rd floor, New York, NY 10019. (212) 684-4224. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Address changes and subscription inquiries: CIGAR AFICIONADO, P.O. Box 37367 Boone, IA 50037-0367; call 1-800-365-4929; or email cgacustserv@cdsfulfillment.com. Subscription rates: United States, \$24.95 per year; Canada, \$38.00 per year; all other foreign, \$56.00. Subscriptions are payable in U.S. funds. TO ORDER A NEW SUBSCRIPTION, call 1-800-992-2442, email cgacustserv@cdsfulfillment.com, or write to aforementioned Boone address. To order back issues, call 1-800-761-4099. Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned, and no responsibility can be assumed for such material. All “Letters to the Editor” should be sent to the editor at the aforementioned New York address. All rights in letters sent to CIGAR AFICIONADO will be treated as unconditionally assigned for publication and copyright purposes and subject to CIGAR AFICIONADO’s unrestricted right to edit. CIGAR AFICIONADO® is a registered trademark of M. Shanken Communications, Inc. All rights reserved. Nothing may be reprinted or reproduced in whole or in part without written permission from the publisher. Copyright © 2017, M. Shanken Communications, Inc. To sell CIGAR AFICIONADO call: 1-800-344-0763.



Every legend has a beginning



#13 Cigar of 2017 by ^{cigar}aficionado



ARCHETYPE

AXIS MUNDI



ARCHETYPE



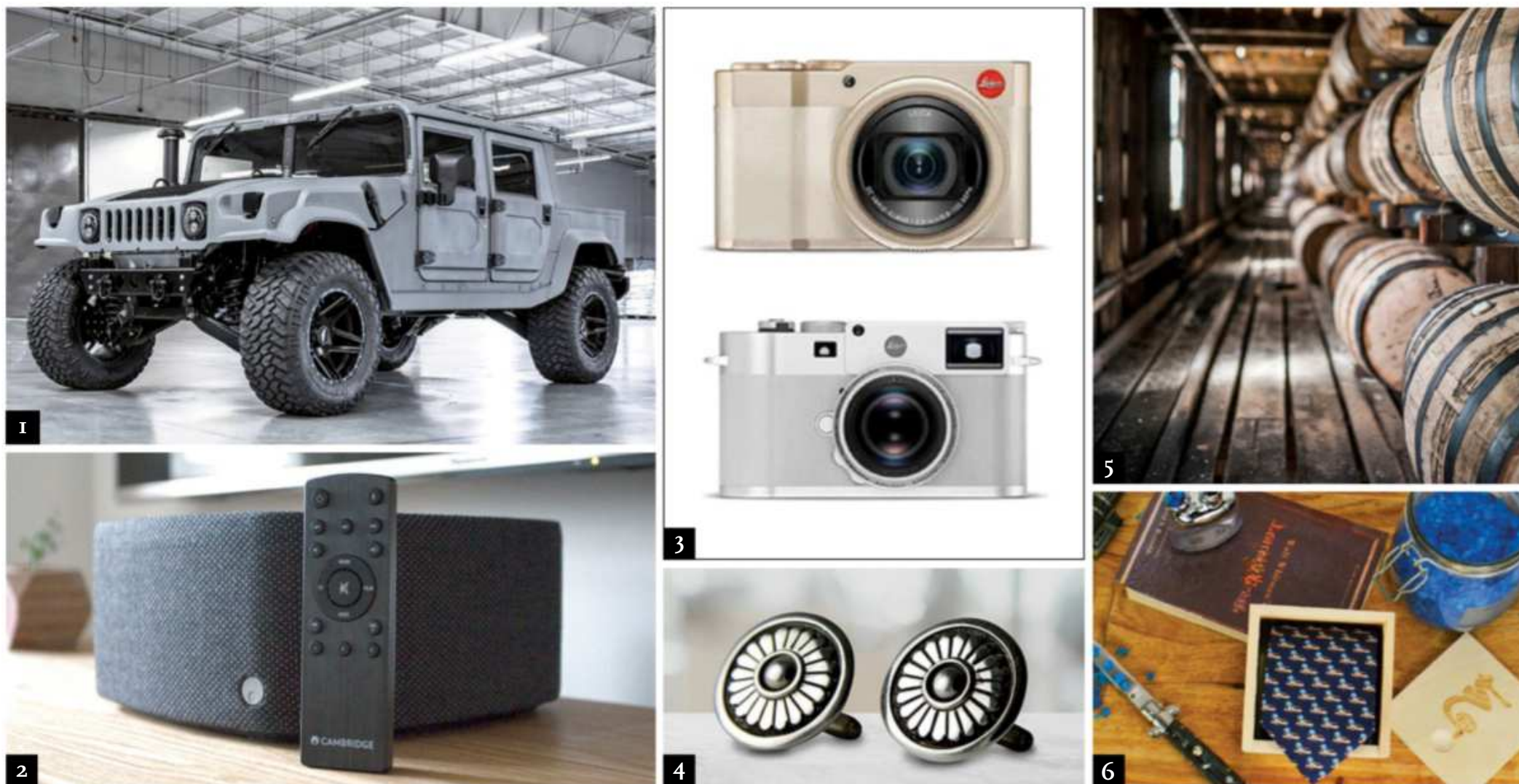
f/venturacigar venturacigar.com

#archetypecigars  @venturacigar

WARNING: This product can expose you to chemicals including tobacco smoke, which is known to the State of California to cause cancer and birth defects or other reproductive harm. For more information go to www.P65Warnings.ca.gov.

WARNING: Cigars contain many of the same carcinogens found in cigarettes, and cigars are not a safe substitute for smoking cigarettes.

made for you



In a world of fast food and one-size-fits-all sensibilities, how often does something feel made especially for you? The “Made for You” section celebrates those items that are created with such high quality of hand workmanship and degree of customization that they become individual to you. In each issue, our editors will endeavor to bring you special things from anywhere on the globe, choosing them solely on the basis of outstanding quality. Our goal is to give you guidance on the best of everything.

1 BESPOKE BEHEMOTH—MIL-SPEC AUTOMOTIVE

The vision of Mil-Spec Automotive is the Hummer reenvisioned, and now, with the Truck #002, it adds a customer's vision. Six of the 12 hand-built units in its Launch Edition series will be tailor-made for each customer. Customizations include a fully adjustable air-ride system and seats that allow heating and cooling, massage selection and adjustable seat supports. The interior is tricked out with plenty of leather and the slant-back top design has a Kevlar texture. Price tag starts at \$218,499. milspecauto.com

2 ROUND SOUND IN A BOX—CAMBRIDGE AUDIO

The burgeoning all-in-one home audio hub segment continues to grow with the addition of the Yoyo (L) (\$399) from British audio specialist Cambridge Audio. The Yoyo (L) offers powerful, immersive sound courtesy of six speakers nestled inside its stylish, cloth-covered 10-by-10-inch box. Connectivity options include built-in Chromecast, Spotify Connect, Wi-Fi and Bluetooth as well as optical, aux and HDMI wired connections, meaning it can serve as a TV soundbar and also control your favorite music from your phone, without the hassle of pairing. cambridgeaudio.com

3 PHOTO FINISH—LEICA

The German maker of precision cameras has new entries. If your groove is collectors' items with a racy edge, consider the Leica M10 Edition Zagato. Designed by Andrea Zagato, owner of the Italian design house that specializes in automotives, it combines the M10 camera body with a Summilux-M 35-mm lens. Limited to a run of 250, each set goes for \$21,600. A little too fast for your blood? Consider the Leica C-Lux, a pocket-sized shooter with a 20-megapixel sensor that goes for \$1,050. leica.com

4 OFF THE CUFF—TOM TAYLOR

The bromide that men don't wear jewelry is often countered with an argument for watches, but cuff links are the real starting line in male ornamentation. And with Tom Taylor, the New Mexico silver and leatherworks artisan, the adornment will never come off too precious. Motifs range from Maltese crosses and skulls to the kind of star you usually see on a sheriff's badge. Links can also be inlaid with stones like turquoise. Remember, you'll need a shirt with French cuffs. The company also makes belts, belt buckles and sturdy leather bags. tomtaylorbuckles.com

5 TENNESSEE TOUR—MINT JULEP EXPERIENCES

Mint Julep Experiences, the company that made its name providing high-end visits to Kentucky distilleries, is really rolling out the barrel with its Tennessee sour mash whiskey experience. For \$65,000 you get a helicopter ride from Nashville to Lynchburg's Jack Daniel's distillery, pick a barrel of whiskey to be bottled just for you (approximately 240 bottles), go on \$5,000 shopping sprees at Col. Littleton's Leather Co. and Lucchese custom bootery and stay in the Omni Nashville Presidential Suite. mintjuleptours.com

6 TIE IN CHEEK—EMERSON BESPOKE

When suited up, you can only be so cheeky with your jacket, slacks and shirt. Your tie, however, leaves room for expression. Emerson Bespoke makes ties that allow you to express yourself in fun ways. Grand Old Party shows elephants holding Martini glasses. Let's Cook (pictured) with its blue plume coming from a white and orange RV, pays homage to Walter White, the humble math teacher turned meth lord in the superb AMC drama “Breaking Bad.” The ties are made from silk milled in Como, Italy. emersonbespoke.net



VANILLA

SO GOOD

Crown Royal[®]
VANILLA

PLEASE ENJOY RESPONSIBLY.
CROWN ROYAL VANILLA FLAVORED WHISKY. 35% ALC/VOL. THE CROWN ROYAL COMPANY, NORWALK, CT.